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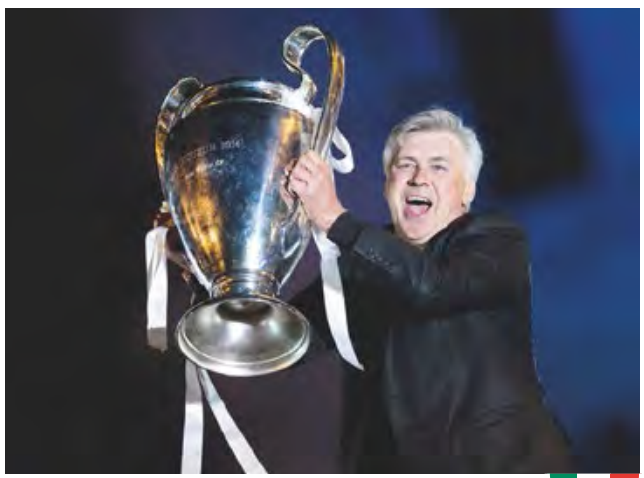

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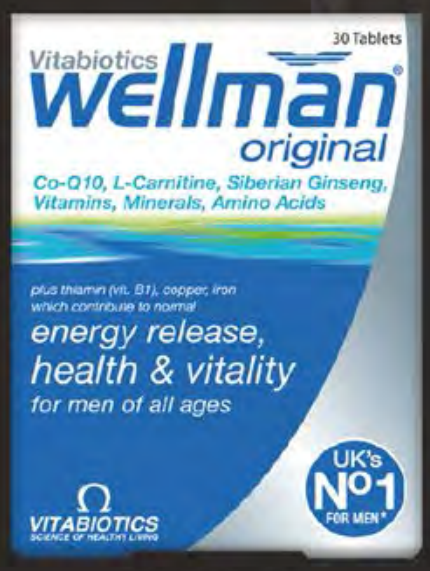

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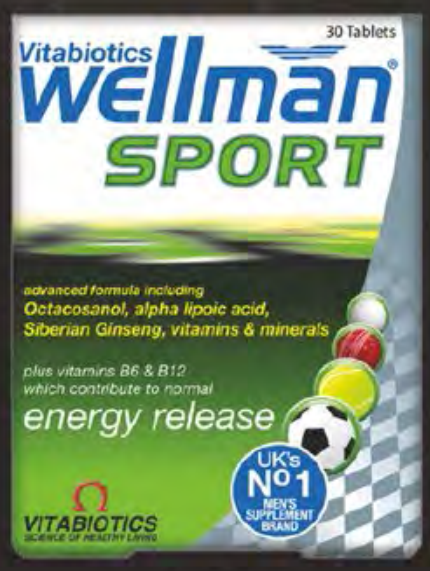

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The global game caught on camera

ENGLAND...Fulham defend as snow falls during their FA Cup 3rd round replay away to Wolverhampton Wanderers

ITALY...Francesco Totti celebrates scoring against Lazio by taking a selfie in front of the Roma fans

EQUATORIAL GUINEA...Gabon's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (No9) celebrates with his team-mates after scoring against Burkina Faso in the African Nations Cup

AUSTRALIA...Jordan's Oday Zahran heads the ball clear from a Palestine opponent as their shadows are cast across AAMI Park in Melbourne during the Asian Cup

URUGUAY...police outnumber fans at the South American Youth Championship match between Brazil and Chile in Maldonado

PORTUGAL...Penafiel's Helder Guedes (right) battles against Bruno Martins Indi of Porto and a rain sodden pitch

SPAIN...Real Madrid supporters greet the arrival of their team's bus prior to a Spanish Cup tie against city rivals Atletico at the Santiago Bernabeu

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FROM THE EDITOR

By the time you read this, the nominations will have closed for this summer's FIFA presidential elections. Whether anybody of substance comes forward to challenge Sepp Blatter is irrelevant. By seeking a fifth term in office, Blatter has broken promises he made at the time of his last re-election, and made a mockery of the whole process.

We have deliberately tried to avoid mention of a former French international's misguided attempts to stand against Blatter (because he's not worth it). However, if any good does come of his silly publicity stunt, it will be to raise awareness of the influence that bookmakers now have on the global game.

> For all the efforts being made to tackle match-fixing, football has become reliant upon the betting industry

For all the efforts being made to tackle match-fixing, football has become reliant upon the betting industry for its very survival. Many clubs and indeed entire leagues would struggle without the financial support of the betting industry.

We have made a number of changes to the magazine this month, with some new features as well as the return of some old favourites. There are also some exciting developments on our website, *worldsoccer.com*, with regular weekly columns from our correspondents around the world.

As ever, I am interested to hear your views of the changes.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Prince Ali to take on Sepp Blatter ..... page 13
2 Barcelona call elections ..... page 80
3 Real Madrid win Club World Cup ..... page 76
4 Fernando Torres returns to Atletico Madrid ..... page 14
5 The Champions League knockout stage kicks off ..... page 28
6 New York anger over Lampard deal ..... page 84
7 Giovinco becomes MLS' highest-paid player ..... page 16
8 Argentinian league expands to 30 teams ..... page 82
9 Libertadores Cup group stage starts ..... page 90
10 Guimaraes challenge Portugal's big three ..... page 79

Gone...former goalkeeper Zubizarreta was Barcelona's director of football

SPAIN

Barca sack Zubizarreta as transfer ban upheld

Andoni Zubizarreta has been sacked as Barcelona's director of football, while his deputy, Carles Puyol, also left the Catalan club.

Zubizarreta, the club's former goalkeeper, replaced his one-time team-mate Txiki Begiristain in the summer of 2010 but faced criticism this season for the club's transfer policy.

In addition, his position was in danger of becoming untenable after a FIFA ban on the club's transfer activity in 2015 was upheld by the Court of Arbitration in Sport (CAS).

Barcelona will not be able to sign any new players until January 2016 after CAS upheld the ban for breaching FIFA's rules on the transfer of players aged under 18.

"These three-and-a-half months have given me the opportunity to see another side of the club," said Zubizarreta.

"I want to grow, both personally and professionally, so that, in the future, hopefully I can return to this house and give back everything you have given me during these unforgettable years."

Zubizaretta was criticised for the €20million signing of French defender Jeremy Mathieu, while another summer signing, Thomas Vermaelen, has yet to play because of injury.

Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu has called early elections for this summer in a bid to lift the negative "tension" at the club.

● *For more on Barcelona, see page 80*

"It's a harsh sanction on the part of FIFA. A warning would have been sufficient"

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge comes out in support of Barcelona following their transfer ban

SPAIN

Real Madrid win race to sign teen star Odegaard

Martin Odegaard, the much-hyped 16-year-old, has agreed to join Real Madrid in a lucrative deal that will earn Norwegian club Stromsgodset £2.3million.

Odegaard visited training facilities at clubs across Europe, including Arsenal, Bayern Munich and Liverpool, before opting to join Real. The deal was reportedly sealed when Real offered his father, Hans Erik, a position on the club's coaching staff.

Real plan to play Odegaard in the club's reserve side, Castilla, although he will train with the first-team squad.

Old and the new...former Real legend Emilio Butragueno (right) welcomes Odegaard

Odegaard made his debut for Stromsgodset in Norway's top flight at the age of 15 and became Norway's youngest international when he started against United Arab Emirates, aged 15 years and 253 days, in August 2014.

John Holmesdale

Chinese invest in Atletico

Chinese property tycoon Wang Jianlin, who is worth $13.2billion according to *Forbes* magazine, is to buy a 20 per cent stake in Atletico Madrid for €45million.

Said to be China's second-richest man, Wang is chairman of the Dalian Wanda Group, which has been buying up big foreign brands amid a weak domestic real estate market and is the first Chinese company to invest in a top European club.

Singaporean businessman Peter Lim bought a controlling stake in La Liga side Valencia in May last year.

HEROES & VILLAINS

HAMZA ALDARADREH

The third-choice striker for Jordan at the Asian Cup, he scored a hat-trick when called upon to play against Palestine after regular forward Ahmad Hayel collapsed with exhaustion during the previous week.

Hat-trick...Aldaradreh

STEPHAN WHITE

The 12-year-old Australian ball boy advised China goalkeeper Wang Delai to dive to his left – and he saved a penalty from Saudi Arabia's Naif Hazazi in the Asian Cup.

YASUHITO ENDO

Became only the 16th player to win 150 caps as Japan beat Iraq 1-0 in the Asian Cup.

JULIO CESAR

The goalkeeper kept seven clean sheets, and hadn't conceded a goal for 719 minutes, as Benfica chalked up a run of nine successive league wins.

ALEXANDRE LACAZETTE

Scored in seven successive matches to help Lyon go top of Ligue 1 in France.

Seventh heaven...Lacazette's goals put Lyon top of Ligue 1

GARY STEVEN ROBBAT

Malaysia's international midfielder was banned for three months after being found guilty of signing for two different clubs. The in-demand 22-year-old agreed deals to join Super League champions Johor DT and their rivals, Malaysian Cup holders Pahang.

Penalised...Gary agreed deals with two rival club sides

WOJCIECH SZCZESNY

Arsenal's goalkeeper was fined £20,000 for smoking in the showers after his side lost 2-0 at Southampton in the Premier League.

STEFAN SAVIC

Fiorentina's Montenegrin defender was handed a four-match ban for violent conduct after he was sent off for elbowing Parma's Antonio Cassano in an off-the-ball incident near the end of his side's 1-0 defeat.

Clash...Savic (in violet) and Cassano

TORBEN AAKJAER

Manchester United's Denmark-based European scout was sacked for posting offensive messages on Facebook. "Manchester United is an inclusive organisation and will not tolerate this sort of behaviour," commented the club on Aakjaer, who had been employed by United on a casual basis since 2011.

"He resembles me technically. The public is enchanted by him"

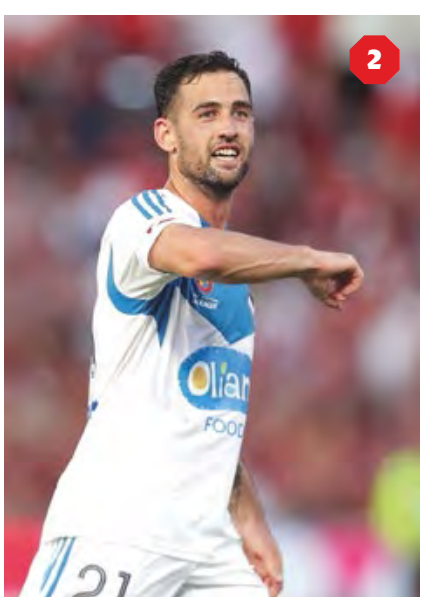
Zinedine Zidane gives his stamp of approval to Real Madrid midfielder Isco

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/zFzihs

1 SIMONE ZAZA
Sassuolo v Milan
A smartly taken volley on the run secures victory for Sassuolo as they came from behind to beat Milan.

2 CARL VALERI
Melbourne Victory v Western Sydney Wanderers
Following a corner, the ball breaks to the edge of the box – from where he fires home a stunning shot into the top corner.



3 SARDAR AZMOUN
Iran v Qatar
Leaves defender Almahdi Ali Mukhtar stranded in the penalty area with a superb turn before slotting the ball past the goalkeeper.

4 JEREMY MATHIEU
Barcelona v Elche
A fantastic left-footed free-kick, hit with pace that curls into the top corner.

5 SAM LARSSON
Heerenveen v Utrecht
Mark Uth nutmegs Utrecht's Ramon Leeuwin before Joey Van den Berg produces a "rabona" assist for Larsson to finish with a neatly taken half-volley.

6 MARCO FABIAN,
Guadalajara v Pumas
A powerful shot from outside the penalty area flies into the far top corner of the goal.

WINNERS

REAL MADRID
Equalled Milan's record of four World and Intercontinental Cups with victory in the Club World Cup Final.

GRENOBLE
The minnows from the fourth tier of French football shocked Marseille by beating their opponents 5-4 on penalties after a 3-3 draw in the Cup.

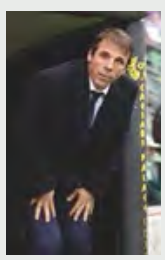
YAYA TOURE
The Manchester City and Ivory Coast midfielder was voted CAF African Player of the Year for a record fourth consecutive time.

LOSERS

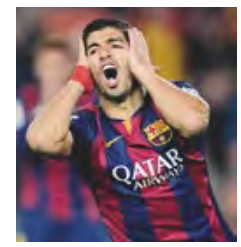
QUEENS PARK RANGERS
Became the first English top-flight side to lose their opening 10 away fixtures in the league for 50 years.

HATEM BEN ARFA
Banned from playing for French club Nice because he had already played for two sides this season.

GIANFRANCO ZOLA
The former Italy international was thrashed 5-0 by Palermo in his first game as coach of Cagliari.



"Although I like him as a player, recruiting him was a mistake. He's not adapting"



Ex-Atletico Madrid coach turned pundit Jorge D'Alessandro tells a Spanish radio station that Barcelona made a miscalculation in signing Luis Suarez (right)

HEADLINER

Prince Ali

Jordanian ExCo member launches bid to unseat Blatter

When Prince Ali bin al Hussein of Jordan took on powerful, long-serving Chung Mong-joon for FIFA's Asian vice-presidency in 2011, he had the behind-the-scenes support of Sepp Blatter.

One of the planks of Prince Ali's programme was a need for greater transparency in football governance. To Blatter's chagrin, he not only meant it but has sought to follow through.

Hence Blatter was perturbed two years ago when Prince Ali decided not to contest the AFC presidency left vacant by the life ban on Mohammed bin Hammam. Did that mean, Blatter fretted, that Prince Ali was plotting a run for the very top job?

From that point on their political relationship has been all downhill and the Jordanian has developed a quietly solid reputation among the ExCo's reformist minority who have proved an increasingly irritating thorn in Blatter's side.

Blatter's relationship with Prince Ali had turned on its head; hence the elevation of Sheikh Salman to the AFC presidency and subsequent assumption to the Asian vice-presidency.

This means that Prince Ali's first four-year term as Asian vice president is also his last and will come to an end at FIFA Congress in Zurich in May. Indeed, the powerful opposition of both Sheikh Salman and his Kuwaiti mentor, Olympic powerbroker Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah, means Prince Ali may even struggle to retain his FIFA ExCO place as an AFC delegate.

> Prince Ali has nothing to lose by taking on FIFA president Blatter

Hence the 39-year-old has nothing to lose by taking on Blatter.

He will be assured of widespread support from within UEFA, whose senior figures are angry that Blatter changed his mind after promising in 2011 not to stand again. But UEFA struggled to find a willing candidate from within its own ranks – with even president Michel Platini deciding he would seek a third term leading his own federation rather than challenge Blatter – so that in itself shows how intimidating the Europeans found the prospect of trying to oust the long-serving Swiss.

Prince Ali's declaration of intent was a crucial blow to the year-long presidency campaign run by former FIFA official Jerome Champagne. The French former diplomat conceded, two weeks from the candidacy deadline, that he lacked the five written nominations necessary to even enter the race.

In an open letter to federations and their officials worldwide, Champagne said: "The feeling exists that the final result of the election is set and that it would be risky to sign them. There is also the fear of being singled out or punished.

"And now individuals without a program declare their interest, and gold-diggers openly use FIFA for their own benefit, rather than being of service."

The gold-digger reference was a swipe at David Ginola, the former France and Tottenham Hotspur player who stated his own interest – and desperate lack of knowledge – in a campaign bankrolled by a betting company and destined for certain failure.

No one can accuse Prince Ali of being inconsistent as his manifesto echoes his campaign theme within the AFC four years ago: the need for transparency.

He said: "FIFA as an organisation tends to be a bit secretive. We should be open and happy and confident to be engaged with everyone.

"We have to really focus on restoring people's confidence in the organisation, that will be our No1 priority. I was probably the first to ask for the Garcia report to come out, and I believe that we should be totally transparent in that respect.

"We have a lot of things that need to be addressed and reform is crucial. I'm looking to make real change that's why I'm putting my hat in the ring. Change is inevitable, we need to get back to basics."

Prince Ali, who is son of the late King Hussein and late Queen Alia, comes from a sport-responsible family. His half-brother Prince Feisal is an IOC member, while sister Princess Haya spent eight years as president of the International Federation for Equestrian Sports.

He himself has tried his hand at football, rugby, wrestling, boxing and sky diving. He has also tried mountain climbing. Suffice to say that in order to oust Blatter he will have to scale a political Everest.

Keir Radnedge

Way forward... Prince Ali (centre) is promoting transparency

"Azerbaijan and some African countries got in touch, and I also had some offers from eastern Europe, but basically I'm looking for a team which will allow me to stay reasonably close to home"

At 76, Giovanni Trapattoni still yearns for another spell in the technical area

HEADLINER

Fernando Torres

"The Kid" is back in Madrid at the age of 30

Forty-five-thousand people turned out the day that Fernando Torres came home. There were almost as many supporters in the Calderon for Torres' presentation on the Sunday morning as there had been in the stadium the night before, when Atletico played Levante.

"We have been waiting for this moment since 24 July 2007," said club president Enrique Cerezo. "I always hoped it would be a 'see you later', not a 'goodbye'," said Torres; and so it was. Seven-and-a-half years later, "The Kid" was back, aged 30.

Torres admitted he had left because he could see that he and the club were heading in different directions; Atletico were lurching from crisis to crisis and most were surprised not that he eventually left but that it had taken so long. An Atletico fan who came through the club's youth system and whose grandfather had taken him to the Calderon, Torres made his debut as a 17-year old while they were in the second division – or "hell" as the then-owner Jesus Gil put it.

He was the hope to which they clung, their best player and their captain, hugely iconic. He helped bring them up and was then their top scorer every season.

When he went, leaving a club that had not won anything and did not look likely to either, no one bore him grudges. When he won, with Liverpool, Spain or Chelsea, they celebrated; when he celebrated, he did so with an Atletico flag. The winning goal at the 2008 European Championships was theirs too. He was one of them.

Torres left to win things, he said, and he won the Euros, the World Cup, the European Cup and the Europa League. Now he was back. In the meantime, Atletico had started winning things too; a revolution has been led by Diego Simeone, just as Torres' own difficulties were beginning.

"This is a different club now," Torres said on his return. "I've won things but what's missing for me now is to win something with Atletico."

> "We have been waiting for this moment since 24 July 2007"
> Atletico president Enrique Cerezo

For Torres, there was something redemptive about the move. "Atletico have been my only home," he admitted in the summer. He had once been Simeone's captain; now Simeone was his coach. They had stayed in touch while he was away. His return was a psychological boost for player and club. The excitement and expectation at his presentation was extraordinary. Torres took the microphone and said: "One day, you'll tell me what I have done to deserve a reception like this."

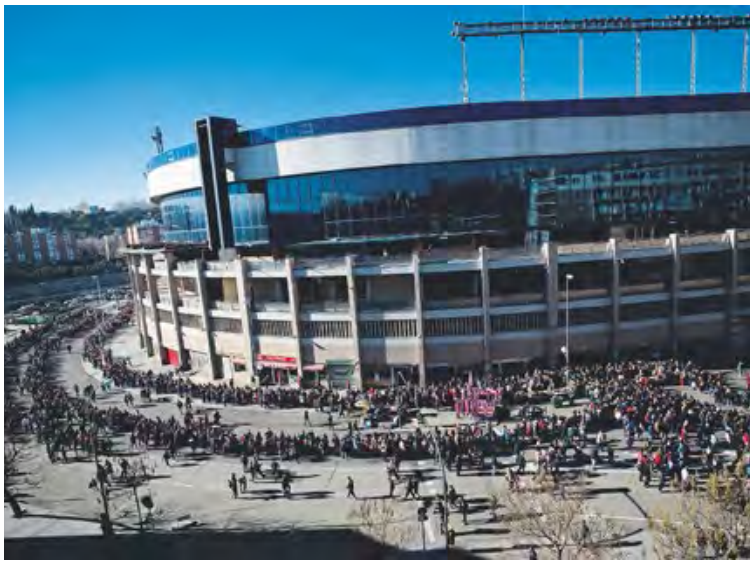
Yet few truly expected a start quite like the one Torres had. He was presented on the Sunday; three days later he started in the Spanish Cup against Real Madrid. Few had anticipated him starting, not yet, but there he was...and it turned out to be the very first time he had defeated Real in an Atletico shirt. When he had last played for the club, the derby was the never-ending story with the familiar ending: they always lost. This time, they won 2-0.

That was the first leg; a week later came the second leg and it got even better.

Atletico knocked their rivals out of the cup and Torres did not just score his first-ever goal at the Santiago Bernabeu – he also scored his second-ever. The first came 47 seconds into the first half, the second 35 seconds into the second. The 2-2 draw sent Atletico into the quarter-finals.

"I feel happy: happy to have scored and happy to go through," Torres said. "With each passing day I understand better what the manager wants and I will fit better into the team."

That final line revealed the learning process: the fact that Torres did not come expecting to be the star or even the first-choice striker. Mario Mandzukic remains ahead of him. Torres knows his role. "I am here to be useful," he says. Simeone sees him as a player who offers something different to the other forwards – in particular the ability to run at and



Welcome...fans queue to get into the Calderon to see Torres' presentation

"Normally, it's older players who pick up injuries more easily. But here in France, it's the young ones"

Monaco boss Leonardo Jardim accuses French academies of inadequate conditioning work

Perfect...Torres' first goal on his return was against arch-rivals Real

beyond defences. Not that he wanted to load pressure on Torres. "Fernando is not our saviour," Simeone has insisted.

That means starting as many games on the bench as on the pitch, and Torres knows that. But Simeone was keen to give him opportunities early on, to get him into the dynamic of the team as quickly as he could. He started against Real Madrid, twice, and against Granada, lasting an hour each time. When he departed he was handed a standing ovation.

Against Barcelona at the Camp Nou he came on as a sub. Three starts and one sub appearance, in his four games brought two wins and a draw, progress in the Spanish Cup and two goals.

After the 2-2 draw at the Bernabeu, Simeone said of Torres: "When Fernando came out of our youth academy he was very young for everything that happened to him but he responded very well. He left and grew up and now he is a man. He is responding still.

"I'm very happy for him, delighted that in matches like today's he responds the way he did.

And then Simeone added with quiet understatement: "The fans are happy, his arrival is doing us good, even if some people doubted him."

Sid Lowe

OBITUARIES

"Union Jack"...former Wolves owner Hayward

Jack HAYWARD (1923-2015)
The owner of Wolverhampton Wanderers for 17 years, until 2007, he helped the club into the Premier League in 2003.

Jeno BUZANSZKY (1925-2015)
The last surviving member of the "Mighty Magyars" side, he made his debut for Hungary in 1950 and played in the 1954 World Cup Final, in which they lost to Germany. He also played in Hungary's 6-3 thrashing of England at Wembley and was a member of the 1952 Olympic gold-medal winning team.

Gasan MAGOMEDOV (1994-2015)
The 20-year-old Anzhi midfielder was shot dead while driving near his home in Russia's North Caucasus. His car was hit by machine-gun fire and he died from his wounds while being transported to hospital.

Junior MALANDA (1994-2015)
Wolfsburg's Belgium under-21 midfielder was a passenger in a car that crashed on a motorway near the German city of Bielefeld. He was on his way to join up with team-mates before flying to South Africa for a training camp. He made 15 appearances for his club this season, the last of which was against Cologne In December.

Car crash...Malanda

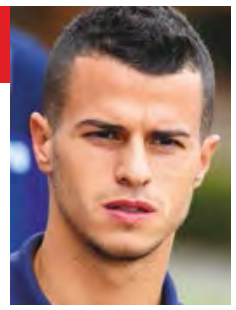
"Ronaldo did nothing at the World Cup. I can't take this award seriously"

Johan Cruyff (left) insists in *De Telegraaf* that German World Cup-winning midfielder Toni Kroos would have made a better Ballon d'Or recipient than Cristiano Ronaldo

Abroad...Giovinco does not see a move to MLS hindering his Italy prospects

HEADLINER

Giovinco



Set to join highest earners in MLS

Italy international Sebastian Giovinco will become the highest-earning Italian player in the world after signing a five-year contract to play for MLS side Toronto.

The 28-year-old attacker, who is out of contract with Juventus this summer, will earn a basic annual salary of around $7million at Toronto – which is higher than the $6m earned by David Beckham at Los Angeles Galaxy but less than the $7.1m that Brazilian star Kaka is reported to be earning at Orlando City.

Toronto have also signed USA international striker Jozy Altidore from Sunderland in a straight swap for Jermain Defoe. Altidore is reported to be earning in the region of $5m. With USA midfielder Michael Bradley, also a high earner at the Canadian club, Toronto are making a powerful bid for MLS success.

Giovinco was named in the last Italy squad, in November, and national coach Antonio Conte appears to have given his blessing to Giovinco's move.

"What else should he have done?" Conte asked. "In a few years players will elbow each other to go there.

"[MLS] will grow so much, and not just in terms of chatter. According to the latest surveys young Americans between six and 12 years old don't choose the traditional sports like basketball and football, but they pick soccer. If they [North America] go down that road, pretty soon there's going to be problems for everyone.

"Seba made an important economic decision – who gives you that kind of money? And he's not going there to pass the time because I know him. He's a good guy."

Giovinco's move to MLS follows the decision of Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard to sign an 18-month contract with LA Galaxy and Frank Lampard's controversial decision to join New York City FC (see page 84).

HEADLINER

Juan Roman Riquelme

Playmaker calls time on glittering career

Juan Roman Riquelme, one of the most talented players of his generation, has announced his retirement at the age of 36. The playmaker made 51 appearances for Argentina, scoring 17 goals, and was a key figure in Boca Juniors' 2007 Libertadores Cup triumph.

He also played in Spain for Barcelona and Villarreal, reaching the Champions League semi-finals in 2006, and latterly had a spell with Argentinos Juniors. He had recently been linked with a move to the United States or Paraguay.

"I have decided to no longer play football," announced Riquelme. "Now I am just a fan. I will go and suffer in the stadium. I am very pleased with the career I had.

Farewell...Riquelme was Argentinian footballer of the year four times

"I enjoyed football to the maximum. I hope the people have enjoyed it alongside me. I tried to have a good time. I tried to give everything I could to fans of Boca, Argentina, Villarreal and Barcelona, in the youth teams and the full team.

"I am someone who makes decisions calmly, who thinks a lot. It's clear now that I'll be on holiday, I'll have fun, enjoy time with my children.

"From now on my football life ends and a new life starts. Let's see what it holds."

"Ventura treated me like a cretin. He said I wasn't fit, which certainly wasn't the case."

Italy midfielder Antonio Nocerino hits out at Torino coach Giampiero Ventura after quitting the Turin club for Parma in the transfer window

REPORTS we couldn't make up

Fall guy...Mancini

1 Dinamo Bucharest's 2007 Champions League qualifier against Lazio was fixed, according to an investigation by Romanian website ProSport. Lazio won the second leg of the qualifier 3-1, in August 2007, to book their place in the Champions League group stage, having drawn 1-1 in Rome.

Ex-Dinamo defender Cristi Pulhac told ProSport of his concerns that the match was fixed. ProSport than published comments from an unnamed former Dinamo shareholder who claimed that "the price paid was the amount for [Stefan] Radu's transfer."

Radu officially moved from Dinamo Bucharest to Lazio on loan for €1million in January 2008 with an option to buy for €3.5m.

"It was agreed between the club directors and president Cristian Borcea had negotiated the deal with [Lazio president] Claudio Lotito personally. Then Lazio would buy Stefan Radu, which they did," alleged the anonymous former shareholder.

"The amount was much higher and there was no loan. I can assure you," added the source.

In doubt...the Champions League game between Lazio (in blue) and Dinamo

Selfie...Roma's Totti

2 Internazionale coach Roberto Mancini was knocked over, but not out, during his side's Serie A win over Genoa, when one of his own defenders, Marco Andreolli, cleared the ball out for a Genoa throw in.

Andreolli cleared the ball so powerfully that it hit his coach on the head, knocking him off his feet – despite the former Manchester City boss' attempts at "saving" the ball with his hands.

Mancini fell to the ground before picking himself up, dusting himself down and taking his place back in his technical area for the resumption of the game, which Inter won 3-1.

Asked about his attempt to stop the clearance, Mancini said: "I didn't parry the ball, it really hit me in the face.

"It wasn't very pleasant, but I'm more or less fine."

3 Roma's Francesco Totti found a novel way to celebrate his goal in the derby match with Lazio: he ran towards the end where the Roma fans were based and grabbed someone's mobile phone before taking a "selfie" in front of the celebrating supporters.

4 Tim Cahill's accuracy in Australia's opening win of the Asian cup against Kuwait was up to his usual standard.

Not only did he score the equalising goal in his side's 4-1 win, but after the game he spotted his son Shae watching from the second tier of the main stand at the AAMI Park stadium in Melbourne, and drop-kicked a ball straight into the young lads arms.

Hit...Cahill celebrates his goal against Kuwait

Young Shae, like most Australian sportsmen, took the catch with aplomb.

5 Morocco's sports minister paid the price for the downpour at the Club World Cup quarter-final between Cruz Azul and Western Sydney Wanderers, by losing his job.

Mohamed Ouzzine was sacked by the king of Morocco after the conditions at the Prince Moulay Abdellah stadium in Rabat reduced the match to a farce.

An outcry in the country's newspapers and on social media led to subsequent games being moved to Marrakech, and Ouzzine paying with his job.

Keir RADNEDGE

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

Olympic football in the firing line

Global attraction...Wembley hosted Senegal's group match with Uruguay at London 2012

Football's place at the Olympics has never been much in question, apart from in 1932, when it was deemed beyond the comprehension of Americans who were expected to turn out to watch the summer Games in Los Angeles. Otherwise it has enjoyed an unchallenged presence since 1900.

For all the ticketing value of Olympic football, this may be about to change – and at a time when the loudest voice in its defence will shortly be absent from the luxurious corners and corridors in which the members of the IOC conduct their most meaningful business.

At London 2012, football accounted for 1.5million tickets for the men's matches and 660,000 for the women; hence football accounted for a quarter of all the Games' ticket sales. However, the Olympic shop window is so valuable that more and more sports are clamouring for a place.

This was one of the thorniest items considered recently by the so-called "Agenda 2020" review set up by IOC president Thomas Bach: how to squeeze as much sport into the Games while holding down the lid on what is judged a logistical and commercial maximum of 310 medal events and 10,500 competitors.

Rio 2016 will play host to 28 sports, but from Tokyo 2020 onwards the debate is wide open and team sports are right in the firing line. The reason is simple: it's all those squads of so many players. Cutting back Olympic men's football from 16 teams to 12 opens up 72 slots; cut out football altogether (men and women = 28 squads) and several other sports might take happy advantage.

Sepp Blatter, as FIFA president and a long-serving IOC member, could call up enough ammunition to resist such a development. But Blatter, if re-elected in May as is likely, will be 80 in the spring of 2016 and thus cease to be an IOC member.

The present FIFA ExCo features other IOC members, such as Issa Hayatou and Lydia Nsekera, but they have never shown any sign of standing up to Blatter within the football world – so what chance would they stand within the IOC?

Russia's big issues

Russia will host its World Cup in 12 stadia in 11 cities, with Moscow the only one with two venues, and the political ebb and flow – over Crimea, Ukraine and who knows where else before 2018? – will not affect the decision taken in December 2010.

A far more pressing concern than political issues, however, is the collapse of the rouble and what this may or may not mean for the costs of building new stadia, airports, hotels and transport systems.

On the evening of the infamous vote, Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, flew to Zurich for a victory press conference at which, jovially, he made no secret that the state would need financial help from the private sector – pointing out Roman Abramovich and co in the front row.

While Chelsea's owner is estimated to have lost several squillions over the past few months, he and his ilk are hardly impoverished, but the billionaire inflation of the luxury property market in London and New York demonstrates how fast they are getting out of Russia.

The Russians have other issues. League action will shortly resume with ever-sharper foreign eyes focused on each succeeding outburst of racist behaviour by officials and fans, while sports minister Vitaly Mutko, and the clubs continue to squabble over limits on foreign players. With the World Cup just over three years away, the issue has surely become academic. Freeing up space for home-grown players is a strategy whose value can be felt in national team terms over a far longer stretch.

> At the last tally, Russia coach Fabio Capello is owed $3.3million in wages

Then, of course, there is the issue of Fabio Capello's pay. Nominally the world's highest-paid national coach, the Italian has not received a bean since before the World Cup finals. At the last tally that added up to $3.3million.

Capello, presumably, has persuaded himself to be patient by the lure of leading Russia at their own World Cup. His critics hope that, sooner or later, his patience will wear thin and he will walk out, giving the RFU the excuse not to pay him anything. **WS**

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Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

Anti-diving crusaders are the true blight on the game

When highly trained, top-line referees make abysmal calls – and make them not in aberrational moments, but with deliberation and assurance – harsh questions should be asked about their decision making.

How can Premier League referee Mike Jones make a call as atrociously bad as the diving call he made against Manchester City's Sergio Aguero in November? How can Michael Oliver, another Premier League official, book Chelsea's Diego Costa for diving when he was obviously tripped by Burnley goalkeeper Tom Heaton? And what about referee Anthony Taylor's yellow card to Cesc Fabregas of Chelsea for diving, when he was clearly fouled by Southampton's Matthew Targett?

I'm focusing on the Premier League because that is where the most spectacularly wrong diving calls are made. Hardly surprising, for a virulently anti-diving attitude has been fostered in England, and it is that attitude that is the root of the problem.

Concentrating on that, I'll give referees the benefit of the doubt for another possible explanation for these gaffes: that by making diving calls, the referees are able to avoid giving penalty kicks. Maybe – but that explanation accuses referees of knowingly and cynically making a wrong call. But I think the main problem with lousy diving calls is that referees believe they are making the right calls.

Premier League refs have been brainwashed by their bosses at the Pro Game Match Officials Board, headed up by Mike Riley, into believing that diving is everywhere, that it is a deadly infection that is threatening to destroy the sport.

An alarmist attitude has spread north of the border. This is the considered view of Gordon Smith, formerly CEO of the Scottish FA. He considers diving "one of the major things wrong with the modern game. It is a serious and persistent threat to the integrity of football." And, of course, it is to be found everywhere: "We see it happen so, so frequently."

> Premier League refs have been brainwashed into believing diving is everywhere

Do we? That "so, so frequently" implies it happens more than once in every game. This is hogwash for it fuels the ugly zealotry that now dominates the diving controversy.

I don't think zealots should ever be listened to – even, or especially, when they infiltrate causes I agree with. Zealots have already managed to turn the anti-diving campaign into a witch-hunt. Their fanaticism will enable them to unearth diving where it doesn't exist. They will be perfectly happy to convict the innocent. Unjustly labelling Aguero, Costa and Fabregas as cheats is fine with them.

And are these witch-hunters supposed to be saving the sport? As long as they are listened to, the diving "plague" will go on, because they will continue to justify their own existence by inventing cases of diving.

It should be clear by now that the zealots need to be reined in. They have engineered a situation where referees are being obliged to make calls they should not be making. Difficult calls.

My own unofficial stats tell me that 50 per cent of diving calls are plain wrong, while a further maybe 20 per cent are so dubious that they should not have been made. Only the referees come out of those circumstances looking bad.

No, I don't think diving should be part of the game. But the dangerous self-righteousness of the witch-hunters, ever ready to punish the innocent along with the guilty, doesn't belong in football either. **WS**

Wrong...Fabregas (in blue) was booked after this foul by Targett

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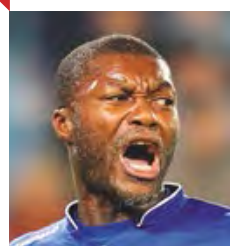

"If you can't put up with the pressure, then take up dancing"

Bastia striker Djibril Cisse fires off a retaliatory shot at Rene Ruello after the Rennes president accused the Corsican club and its supporters of overtly intimidating visiting sides

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

Greek adventure... Pereira

EUROPE

Manchester City completed the signing of Ivorian striker **WILFRIED BONY** from Swansea City for an initial £25million. The 26-year-old agreed a four-and-a-half-year deal, with Swansea set to receive a further £3m in performance-related add-ons. For all the transfer-window moves in Europe's big five leagues go to **http://po.st/MbzY8m**

TONY PULIS, who walked out on Crystal Palace just before the Premier League season started, replaced Alan Irvine as manager of West Bromwich Albion, while **ALAN PARDEW** swapped Newcastle United for Palace after they sacked Neil Warnock.

Hamilton Academical manager **ALEX NEIL** left the Scottish Premier League club to take charge of English Championship side Norwich City.

ROBIN DUTT, who was sacked as coach of Werder Bremen in October, was appointed director of sport at Stuttgart. Dutt, who had a similar role with the German Football Association prior to joining Bremen, replaces Fredi Bobic, who was dismissed in September.

Former Atletico Madrid boss **ABEL RESINO** was appointed coach of Granada for a second time, while **QUIQUE SANCHEZ FLORES** took charge of Getafe for a second time.

VITOR PEREIRA, who won back-to-back Portuguese titles during a two-year stint with Porto, replaced Michel as coach of Greek Super League side Olympiakos.

EUGEN TRICA, who won the double with CFR Cluj as a player in 2008, was appointed coach of the Romanian club for a second time.

New...Becker at the African Nations Cup

Inter Baku coach **KAKHABER TSKHADADZE** replaced Temuri Ketsbaia as boss of Georgia's national side. He will, however, retain his position with the Azerbaijani club side until the summer.

STOYCHO STOEV, who was coach of the year in Bulgaria last season after guiding Ludogorets to the league title, has become Levski Sofia's sixth coach in two seasons.

SOUTH AMERICA

Interim coach **MAURICIO SORIA** signed a four-year permanent deal to lead Bolivia's national side.

Uruguayan coach **DIEGO AGUIRRE** replaced Abel Braga in charge of Brazilian club Internacional.

CONCACAF

GUSTAVO MATOSAS replaced Antonio Mohamed as coach of Mexican champions America.

AFRICA

Equatorial Guinea appointed **ESTEBAN BECKER** as coach of the national team, just 11 days before they hosted the African Nations Cup.

ASIA

Brazilian midfielder **RICARDO GOULART** became Chinese football's most expensive signing of all time when joining Guangzhou Evergrande from Cruzeiro for €15m.

STEPHEN CONSTANTINE was appointed coach of India.

OUT

Third casualty... Paciencia

EUROPE

ROBERTO CARLOS left his post as Sivasspor coach following the Turkish side's 2-0 loss at home to Istanbul Basaksehir.

Vitoria Setubal's **DOMINGOS PACIENCIA** became the third coach to lose his job in Portugal's top flight.

Level on points with Apollon at the top of the league, defending Cypriot champions APOEL parted company with coach **GIORGOS DONIS**.

After consecutive promotions, following liquidation and demotion from the Scottish Premier League to the fourth tier, **ALLY MCCOIST** resigned as manager of Rangers.

AFRICA

Cameroon midfielder **ALEX SONG**, who is currently on loan at West Ham United from Barcelona, retired from international football after being left out of his country's African Nations Cup squad.

Walking away... Roberto Carlos

Zola checks in at old club Cagliari

Former Italy international **GIANFRANCO ZOLA**, who finished his playing career with Cagliari, was appointed coach of the Serie A side, replacing Zdenek Zeman, who was sacked with the side third bottom of the table.

Back...Zola returns to Cagliari

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Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Ronaldo a winner despite World Cup failure

Round up the usual suspects, as was said in the film *Casablanca*. The suspects in this case being Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, first and second in the annual FIFA poll for the Ballon d'Or, with Ronaldo way ahead of his rival, who indeed only just eased Germany's World Cup winning-keeper Manuel Neuer out of second place.

That Ronaldo and Messi are the two best players in the world can hardly be contested. Messi may have slipped behind Ronaldo now, but he has been a four-times winner of the title. Yet in a World Cup year, you do wonder why that major tournament appears to have been disregarded. As it transpired, Messi, exhausted by his supreme efforts in Argentina's attack, had faded when it came to the Final, which his side couldn't remotely have reached without him and a series of remarkable goals.

Messi learned after his team had lost the Final that, against expectations, he had been awarded the tournament's Golden Ball; a distinction that left him stone cold, merely lamenting that his team had missed three good chances to score. He had scored a glorious solo goal to beat a resolute Iran, after which the Argentina coach Alejandro Sabella – reportedly told what to do by Messi himself – enthused: "Of course we have a genius. He's Argentinian. He's in our team. Everyone would like to have one."

He scored twice against Nigeria, whose coach Stephen Keshi observed: "Messi is from Jupiter. He is one hell of a player." He'd scored one hell of a goal against Bosnia, too.

Ronaldo, by contrast, found himself in a Portugal team which even he, with all his immense talents, couldn't galvanise. Indeed, it was doomed after its first game, when centre-back Pepe was sent off against Germany for a spiteful foul.

No denying Ronaldo is a supreme combination of power, skill and flair, as dangerous in the air as he is on the ground. No contesting that without him and his phenomenal 17 goals, Real Madrid could never have won a European Champions Cup which had eluded them for a dozen years. Ronaldo's win implies, however, that this tournament ranks in importance above the World Cup.

Neuer, I felt, should never have ranked so highly. His very late save against Ghana averted a sensational defeat for Germany, but that appalling, flying mid-air foul in the second half of the Final which laid out Gonzalo Higuain could have done him far more severe damage.

Neuer should have been sent off and then where would Germany have been?

Talent...Ronaldo (far left), with Messi and his wife Antonella, at FIFA's World Player of the Year ceremony

Second strip puzzle...Arsenal at Manchester City

Greed at the heart of colour clash

All credit to Arsenal for their triumphant victory at Manchester City, but why without the remotest possibility of a colour clash did they have to wear their horrible yellow and blue second strip? A day earlier I was at White Hat Lane to see Sunderland, abandoning their historic red and white stripes, emerge all in pale blue, Spurs, of course, donning their traditional white.

> "Ronaldo's Ballon D'Or win implies the Champions Cup ranks in importance above the World Cup"

I suppose money, and the need and greed for it, lies behind such gratuitous policies. It would be good to see the Premier League executive intervene and compel clubs to wear their normal jerseys when there is no colour clash.

When I covered Italian football in the 1950s, things were taken a sensible step further. When there was a colour clash it was the home rather than the away team which changed jerseys. The implication being that the home crowd would be happy to see the opposition rather than its own side wearing its own colours.

Time's up...Gerrard is substituted against Chelsea

Will Liverpool rue Gerrard's departure?

Those two impressively taken goals by Steven Gerrard against the lowly but defiant Wimbledon team saved Liverpool's faces in the FA Cup and made you wonder whether they have been well advised so willingly to let him leave.

True, now well into his 30s, Gerrard can hardly be the dynamic force he was for so long. True, he had an unhappy 2014 World Cup, giving away a goal both against Italy and Uruguay. Yet as Jose Mourinho sportingly declared before the recent Chelsea-Liverpool game, it was unfair of Chelsea fans to mock him for the slip at Anfield last season which enabled Demba Ba to run on to score a vital goal.

Arguably his finest hour – or somewhat longer than that – was back in Istanbul in 2005 when he so splendidly rallied a Liverpool team which seemed down and out and were three goals down against Milan in the European Cup Final.

Not long after that there were very strong rumours that a move to Chelsea had been done and dusted for all his long and deep attachment to Liverpool. In the event he remained at Anfield and there were rumours that he had been persuaded to stay by some formidable supporters.

How sad it often was to see England managers fail to resolve the midfield dualism between him and Frank Lampard even to the absurd extent of Gerrard being pushed out, on his wrong foot, on to the left wing.

One recalls, too, that strange story of a local thug who pursued him through the city till he was warned off by a bigger thug, whose case was later pleaded in criminal court by Gerrard's father; only for the miscreant to flee custody.

Read Brian Glanville's exclusive online column at worldsoccer.com

Rodriguez deserved better

Ideally, however controversially, I'd have liked to see FIFA's player of the year award go to Colombia's James Rodriguez, who was given just the Puskas Award for the Goal of the Year: his dramatic spin and volley against Uruguay. He ended with half a dozen goals but wasn't even chosen for FIFA's best XI of the year.

David Luiz was – which raised an infinity of eyebrows. No one denies the Brazilian's ability, but nor can one deny his infinite fallibility, the lack of discipline which sends him cantering out of central defence and leaving appalling gaps. Luiz was a disaster in the 7-1 annihilation by the Germans, and in the third-place game against Spain he carelessly gave away a goal.

Another surprise was Roy Hodgson's vote for Javier Mascherano. True, Mascherano was a doughty figure in the World Cup and Argentina would not have reached the Final without his remarkable goal-saving tackle on Arjen Robben. But to rank him above Messi seems inexplicable.

Stunning...Rodriguez scores his sensational World Cup goal against Uruguay

Everybody a loser in torrid Evans affair

The horrid affair of Ched Evans rolls on and on. As things stand, pragmatically, I cannot see him being taken on by any British club, such is the violence of the clamour and cacophony against him. Nor do I see any prospect of success for his ultimate appeal to the Criminal Cases Review Commission, where a mere three per cent of a massive 18,753 cases have been successful.

The fact that he has made this ultimate appeal means that despite a recent, somewhat half-hearted, gesture towards his victim, he continues to insist upon his own innocence. For myself, my sympathy goes to that unfortunate girl, abused so viciously and implacably by Evans' more vindictive supporters that she has been forced to change her domicile five times.

Nor can Evans join a foreign club since he served only half of his five-year jail sentence and is therefore obliged to see out the other two-and-a-half years under the aegis of his probation officer.

Meanwhile, whatever position one takes on his case, it was astonishing to see Gordon Taylor, the highly paid chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, come out with such a ludicrously crass and confused intervention.

Taylor, whatever his gambling misadventures, is someone I have known, liked and respected for many years. But to draw a comparison between the Evans case and the appalling Hillsborough disaster of 1989 was inept and insensitive to a degree.

Taylor declared Evans "wouldn't have been the first person or persons to have been found guilty and maintain their innocence and then be proved right. If we're talking about things in football, we know what was alleged to have happened at Hillsborough and it's now unravelling and we're finding it very different to how it was portrayed, indeed, by the police at the time."

Adding insult to injury, his statement having led to a hail of criticism, he declared: "Ched Evans is a totally different case but he has the same belief in his innocence."

But where in all logic is the analogy? Like Taylor himself in his second statement, we all admire the dogged, noble way in which the dedicated inquiry has shown up the mendacity of the police. But Taylor's clumsy statements seem to suggest that the despicable red-top accusations, seemingly engendered by a small local press agency manipulated by the police, vilely accusing Liverpool fans of robbing the dead and urinating on their bodies, was widely believed. I cannot remember anybody at the time believing such libels. **WS**

Outcast...Evans

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DESTINATION EUROPE

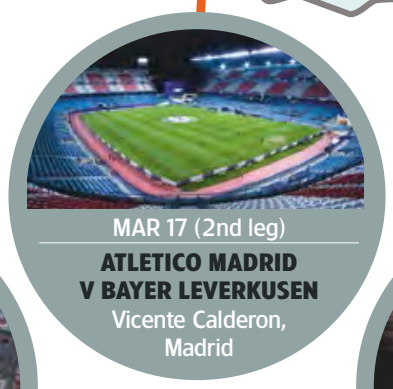
The Champions League returns. Once again, familiar names will dominate proceedings

The race is on to reach Berlin on Saturday June 6 for the 2015 Champions League Final. No team has retained the trophy since Milan in 1990 and yet the same teams are in the frame. The winners are likely to come from a select band of clubs, a group that is growing smaller every year.

In the last 20 years, only Ajax (1995) and Porto (2004) have come from outside the big five leagues. Ironically, two of the strongest – and wealthiest – contenders, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City, have yet to see their name on the trophy.

MAR 10 (2nd leg)
PORTO V BASLE
Estadio do Dragao, Porto

MAR 10 (2nd leg)
REAL MADRID V SCHALKE
Santiago Bernabeu, Madrid



MAR 17 (2nd leg)
ATLETICO MADRID V BAYER LEVERKUSEN
Vicente Calderon, Madrid

FEB 17 (1st leg)
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN V CHELSEA
Parc des Princes, Paris

MAR 18 (2nd leg)
BARCELONA V MANCHESTER CITY
Camp Nou, Barcelona

FEB 24 (1st leg)
MANCHESTER CITY V BARCELONA
Etihad Stadium, Manchester
MAR 11 (2nd leg)
CHELSEA V PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
Stamford Bridge, London
FEB 18 (1st leg)
SCHALKE V REAL MADRID
Veltins-Arena, Gelsenkirchen
MAR 11 (2nd leg)
BAYERN MUNICH V SHAKHTAR DONETSK
Allianz Arena, Munich
FEB 25 (1st leg)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN V ATLETICO MADRID
BayArena, Leverkusen
FEB 25 (1st leg)
ARSENAL V MONACO
Emirates Stadium, London
MAR 17 (2nd leg)
MONACO V ARSENAL
Stade Louis II, Monaco
FEB 24 (1st leg)
JUVENTUS V BORUSSIA DORTMUND
Juventus Stadium, Turin
FEB 18 (1st leg)
BASLE V PORTO
St Jakob-Park, Basle
MAR 18 (2nd leg)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND V JUVENTUS
Signal Iduna Park, Dortmund
FEB 17 (1st leg)
SHAKHTAR DONETSK V BAYERN MUNICH
Arena Lviv, Lviv

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN v CHELSEA

FIRST LEG: FEB 17 | SECOND LEG: MAR 11

Paris Saint-Germain

● Season so far

Despite progress in the Champions League, domestic form has been disappointing, with the side slipping to third in Ligue 1, behind Marseille and Lyon. South American strikers Ezequiel Lavezzi and Edinson Cavani were dropped after turning up late for January's mid-season winter break in Morocco.

● Key players

Zlatan Ibrahimovic remains the team's talisman, especially on big European nights, but his effectiveness has been affected by injuries this term.

● Emerging star

Brazilian attacker Lucas Moura, who is still only 22, has been averaging a goal every three games from midfield in the league this season.

Big-game player...Ibrahimovic is PSG's talisman

● Coach performance

Laurent Blanc has struggled to assert his authority over unsettled Lavezzi and Cavani, and has admitted: "I don't know if I'll be PSG coach at the end of the season."

● How to beat them

Keep their strikers shackled and take your chances when you get them.

Chelsea

● Season so far

Untroubled in the group stage of the Champions League and had a seemingly impregnable lead in the Premier League by Christmas. However, they came unstuck in January, losing 5-3 at Tottenham Hotspur and going down 4-2 at home to third-tier Bradford City in the FA Cup.

● Key players

The spine of this season's side – Thibaut Courtois in goal, Nemanja Matic and Cesc Fabregas in midfield and Diego Costa in attack – is particularly strong.

● Emerging star

With 30 players out on loan at other clubs, there are few opportunities for youngsters to break into the first team, with Jose Mourinho preferring to stick with his tried and trusted starting XI.

Key...Fabregas (in yellow) has made Chelsea a far greater attacking threat

● Coach Performance

Mourinho has ruffled feathers recently with his criticism of Premier League referees – a sure sign his team is not performing to expectations. He has been critical, too, of the atmosphere at Stamford Bridge.

● How to beat them

The teams that have proved successful against Chelsea have pressed high up the pitch, forcing the defence into errors.

SHAKHTAR DONETSK v BAYERN MUNICH

FIRST LEG: FEB 17 | SECOND LEG: MAR 11

Shakhtar Donetsk

● Season so far

The unstable situation in eastern Ukraine forced Shakhtar to move their home games to Lviv. And although they only won two games in their group, they did enough to reach the knockout stage for the third time in five years.

● Key players

Brazilian striker Luiz Adriano scored a record nine goals in the group stage, including five in one game, against BATE.

● Emerging star

Brazilian midfielder Fred has emerged as a key element over the past season and a half.

● Coach performance

Romanian boss Mircea Lucescu, now 69, has faced a battle to keep hold of players who have been unsettled by the domestic situation in Ukraine.

● How to beat them

Their only defeat in the group stage was at the hands of Athletic Bilbao, who exposed a vulnerability at set-pieces.

Bayern Munich

● Season so far

Imperious: undefeated in the Bundesliga before the winter break and dominant in the Champions League, thrashing Roma 7-1 in Rome. But Bayern were accused of turning a blind eye to human rights abuses when playing a friendly in Saudi Arabia in January.

Handful...Adriano (in white) scored five against BATE

● Key players

Arjen Robben finished the first half of the season in sparkling form.

● Emerging star

Juan Bernat has quickly established himself at left-back since moving to Munich from Valencia last summer.

● Coach performance

Pep Guardiola won the domestic double last season – but talks about a contract extension have not been productive and reports have surfaced that he may quit Munich this summer, a year before the end of his existing deal.

● How to beat them

Although easier said than done, any anti-Bayern strategy has to involve shutting down midfield prompter Xabi Alonso and bottling up the wide attacking areas, where Robben and Franck Ribery usually run amok. Shakhtar will also try to isolate either Mehdi Benatia or Dante in central defence, both of whom can be outpaced or outmanoeuvred.

Sparkling...Robben

BASLE v PORTO

FIRST LEG: FEB 18 | SECOND LEG: MAR 10

Basle

● Season so far
Under former Portugal midfielder Paulo Sousa, Basle recovered from losing twice to Real Madrid and a surprise defeat at Ludogorets to take second spot in their group, ahead of Liverpool, to reach the knockout phase.

● Key players
Midfielder Fabian Frei took on extra responsibility following injury to captain Marco Streller and weighed in with some crucial goals for his side.

Versatile...Xhaka

● Emerging star
Taulant Xhaka, brother of Borussia Monchengladbach midfielder Granit, can play in a number of different defensive positions.

● Coach performance
Sousa was a surprise choice to replace Murat Yakin last summer, having previously coached in Israel and Hungary. But under his guidance Basle have maintained their domestic dominance while also making progress in Europe.

● How to beat them
Proved particularly vulnerable away from home in the group stage, losing heavily to Real Madrid and Ludogorets, who exposed defensive frailties.

Porto

● Season so far
Julen Lopetegui was fiercely attacked for his rotation policy in the early months of the season but he has now started to field a more settled side. Domestic form has been patchy, with Benfica ahead in the league standings, but Porto have been excellent in Europe.

● Key players
Colombian striker Jackson Martinez has been in fine goalscoring form, while Oliver Torres has been the pick of the new Spanish contingent.

Deadly...Colombian sharpshooter Martinez

● Emerging star
Ruben Neves (see *Talent Scout, page 54*) looks a highly promising prospect and is attracting plenty of admirers.

● Coach performance
Porto broke with recent tradition by appointing the Spaniard Lopetegui – and after a tentative start, he is starting to find his feet.

● How to beat them
Keep things tight and wait for Porto to shoot themselves in the foot. They have picked up a worringly persistent habit of conceding soft goals through sloppy passing in their own half.

SCHALKE v REAL MADRID

FIRST LEG: FEB 18 | SECOND LEG: MAR 10

Schalke

● Season so far
Eventful. Jens Keller was fired as coach in October and replaced with ex-Chelsea boss Roberto Di Matteo, who has steered Schalke to the knockout stage. Serbian defender Matija Nastasic was signed on loan from Manchester City during the January window.

● Key players
With injures to Julian Draxler and Jefferson Farfan, the goals of Klaas-Jan Huntelaar have been more important than ever.

● Emerging star
Cameroon striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting has linked well with Huntelaar since his summer move from Mainz.

● Coach performance
Di Matteo has impressed with his perfect German and steadied a Schalke ship that was in danger of running aground.

● How to beat them
As proved by the 5-0 home loss to Chelsea, they are extremely vulnerable to teams who are adept at stepping on the gas in the attacking-third and who play with superior levels of dynamism and skill. The decision of Di Matteo to switch to a three-man defence has worked to a degree, though they still tend to be weak in their marking and closing down.

Real Madrid

● Season so far
Valencia ended their 22-match unbeaten run in January, by which time Real had added the Club World Cup to their collection. In January, they signed Brazilian midfielder Lucas Silva, from Cruzeiro and Norwegian teenager Martin Odegaard – a recognition that, in recent years, Barcelona have stolen a march on them in the field of talent recruitment.

Strike force...Huntelaar on Choupo-Moting's shoulders

● In-form players
Cristiano Ronaldo again leads Europe's goalscoring charts.

● Emerging star
Despite the summer arrival of World Cup stars James Rodriguez and Toni Kroos, midfielder Isco has been a revelation.

Coach performance
Carlo Ancelotti continues to manage egos and keep Real on course for success.

● How to beat them
Valencia played a back three against Madrid's front three to free up extra places in midfield where Ancelotti's side play without a recognised holding midfielder.

Revelation...Isco has had a fine campaign so far

JUVENTUS v BORUSSIA DORTMUND

FIRST LEG: FEB 24 | SECOND LEG: MAR 18

Mature...Pogba

Juventus

● Season so far
Have once again proved to be dominant in Serie A, but they struggled in the group stage of the Champions League, losing key games to Atletico Madrid and Olympiakos. However, they recovered with a crucial win over the Greek side to finish second in the group, behind Atletico.

● Key players
French midfielder Paul Pogba is already among the world's leading midfielders – at the age of 21.

● Emerging star
French teenager Kingsley Coman is an exciting prospect.

● Coach performance
Former Milan boss Massimiliano Allegri succeeded Antonio Conte last summer and has kept the club on course for further domestic success.

● How to beat them
Press and harry them. Juve are used to exercising complete control, dominating the rhythm and flow of a game in Serie A, but in the Champions League, where games are played at a higher tempo, they can struggle to stay with the pace. Andrea Pirlo's crucial contribution can be curtailed by close marking.

Borussia Dortmund

● Season so far
Disastrous in the Bundesliga, where they have been in the relegation zone after a series of terrible results. In contrast, the Champions League has provided a reminder of what Dortmund are capable of producing.

● Key players
Club captain Mats Hummels could leave the club this summer, but until then, he will be a crucial presence at the back.

● Emerging star
Australian keeper Mitchell Langerak finally made the breakthrough, replacing Roman Weidenfeller for the final group game.

● Coach performance
Jurgen Klopp has inevitably come under pressure this season but his stature at the club remains high following the success of recent seasons.

● How to beat them
There is only one antidote to Dortmund's intense pressing game and high-tempo counter-attacks and that is to turn the tables: sit back in numbers, let them have the ball and wait for the right moment to hit on the break. Too many injuries and too little squad rotation has led to a lack of physical and mental freshness, fertile ground for unforced errors at the back.

Crucial prescence...Hummels

MANCHESTER CITY v BARCELONA

FIRST LEG: FEB 24 | SECOND LEG: MAR 18

Manchester City

Season so far
Drawn in a tough group with Bayern and Roma, they again looked like missing out. But City's fortunes changed dramatically with a hat-trick from Sergio Aguero against Bayern. Injuries to strikers Aguero, Edin Dzeko and Stevan Jovetic prompted City to pay Swansea City £28million for Wilfried Bony.

Key players
Aguero, when fit, has fired City out of trouble on many occasions.

Emerging star
None. Sheikh Mansour's millions have been spent on established players.

Coach performance
Manuel Pellegrini will need to make further progress in the Champions League for City's powerbrokers to keep faith in him. He will be looking nervously over his shoulder at Pep Guardiola's situation in Munich.

How to beat them
Yaya Toure, while not the powerhouse he was last season, remains a crucial figure in midfield. Curtailing his runs, as well as the supply lines to attacking midfielder David Silva, remains vital to any attempts to outwit City.

Threat...Aguero

Front three...(from left) Suarez, Neymar and Messi

Barcelona

Season so far
Turbulent, with problems on and off the pitch. Suffered only one defeat in the group stage, to Paris Saint-Germain, but more headaches lie ahead with the upholding of FIFA's global transfer ban.

Key players
Lionel Messi continues to break records, while forming a potentially lethal attacking triumvirate with Neymar and Luis Suarez.

Emerging star
Teenager Munir El Haddadi was a bright spot of Barca's early season form, but he could drop down to Barca B for the remainder of the campaign.

Coach performance
Luis Enrique is likely to be seeking employment this summer after a breakdown in relations with Messi. Presidential elections this summer mean candidates will present their own ideas for who should be in charge.

How to beat them
Barca's build-up play is not as patient, with the midfield often bypassed. Defensive frailties, exacerbated by injuries to summer signings Thomas Vermaelen and Jeremy Mathieu, remain.

ARSENAL v MONACO

FIRST LEG: FEB 25 | SECOND LEG: MAR 17

Arsenal

● Season so far
Hit by injuries to Theo Walcott, Jack Wilshere and Mesut Ozil in the Premier League but fit-again players have re-emerged for a spring challenge for the top four. Two January signings, Polish midfielder Krystian Bielik and Brazilian central defender Gabriel from Villarreal, give Arsene Wenger options.

● In-form players
Alexis Sanchez has thrived in a central attacking role after finding himself marginalised at Barcelona.

● Emerging star
Gedion Zelalem, a German-born, US-raised teenager played in their final game of the group stage.

● Coach performance
Long-serving Wenger, in charge since 1996, has come under fire from some supporters but has stuck to his guns.

● How to beat them
Wenger rarely deviates from his attack-mined, possession-based philosophy, leading to accusations that he has no Plan B. Heavy pressing in midfield always causes Arsenal problems and disrupts their passing rhythm. However, Wenger's use of midfielder Francis Coquelin in a holding role was the key to defeating Manchester City in the league.

Central role...Sanchez

Monaco

● Season so far
It was all change in the summer, with the sale of Radamel Falcao and James Rodriguez, but Monaco's watertight defence was breached just once as they topped their group ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, Benfica and Zenit.

● Key players
Bernardo Silva, from Benfica, has made his loan deal permanent.

● Emerging star
Yannick Ferreira Carrasco is a 21-year old Belgian who is already a lynchpin of the midfield.

● Coach performance
Portuguese boss Leonardo Jardim earned plaudits at Sporting Lisbon for his work with young players, but he has struggled to make an impression in the French league this season.

● How to beat them
Be solid defensively, play on the break and use pace to get in behind.

Lynchpin... Ferreira Carrasco

BAYER LEVERKUSEN v ATLETICO MADRID

FIRST LEG: FEB 25 | SECOND LEG: MAR 17

Bayer Leverkusen

● Season so far
Roger Schmidt arrived from Salzburg in the summer and steered Leverkusen through the Champions League qualifying round. In the group stage they recorded home and away wins over Zenit to finish second in the group behind Monaco.

● Key players
South Korea's Son Heung-min scored some crucial goals in the group stage.

● Emerging star
Winger Karim Bellarabi has played his way into the senior Germany national side this season.

● Coach performance
Schmidt has been compared to Jurgen Klopp for his team's high-pressing tactics but he has come under fire for an approach that many see as too risky.

● How to beat them
With Schmidt's side pressing so high from the first moment to the last, the obvious response to this type of relentless swarming is the long ball behind the Rhinelanders' defence, an avenue which should be meat and drink to a pacy, aware forward. On occasion, the Leverkusener play too frenetically.

Atletico Madrid

● Season so far
There were major changes in the summer, with the sale of Diego Costa to Chelsea, Thibaut Courtois' loan return, and the arrival of Antoine Griezmann and Mario Mandzukic. Lost their opening group game to Olympiakos but then won five in a row to top the group. Former hero Fernando Torres returned to the club in January.

● Key players
The club captain, Gabi, often gets overlooked in the rush to praise some of the bigger names, but he plays a crucial role in midfield.

● Emerging star
Uruguay defender Jose Maria Gimenez has emerged as a key defensive performer in recent months.

● Coach performance
Diego Simeone has created a team in his own rugged image and remains coveted by other, wealthier clubs.

● How to beat them
Atletico defend compactly but with little width and that gives opponents room to exploit space down the flanks. In January, Barcelona, admittedly with Lionel Messi in imperious form, beat Atletico 3-1 at home thanks to a front three which stretched the Atletico defence.

Overlooked...Gabi

Call up...Bellarabi

Rosario's other son

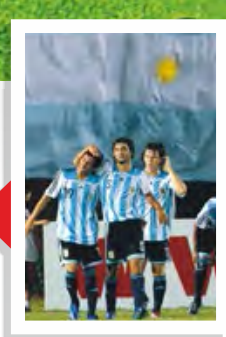
He may not have the glamour of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, but Manchester United's latest number seven has always been a crucial figure for both club and country.

WORDS: Joel Richards, additional reporting by Tom Kundert and John Holmesdale

Timeline

DEC 14, 2005 — Makes his debut for Rosario Central in a 2-2 draw away to Independiente.

JAN 28, 2007 — Is in the Argentina squad that finishes second in the South American Youth Championship in Paraguay.



JUL 19, 2007 — Scores three goals overall as Argentina win the Under-20 World Cup in Canada, beating the Czech Republic 2-1 in the Final.

AUG 29, 2007 — Plays his first game for Benfica, in a 1-0 win away to Copenhagen in the Champions League.

Scores the only goal of the game in the Olympic Final as Argentina beat Nigeria in Beijing.

Two weeks after winning Olympic gold, makes his full senior debut in a World Cup qualifier against Paraguay in Buenos Aires.

Wins the Portuguese League Cup as Benfica beat Sporting Lisbon on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the Final.

Scores his first hat-trick in professional football, in a 4-0 league win away to Leixoes.

AUG 23, 2008 | SEP 6, 2008 | MAR 21, 2009 | FEB 27, 2010 »

A recent exhibition at Rosario's main museum paid tribute to one of the city's great exports. "We are the cereal capital, one of the largest soybean exporting ports in the world," curator Ernesto Aguirre said of the agro-industry of Argentina's second city. "But we are also one of the great football capitals, not just in Argentina, but in the whole of America."

The exhibition, *The Football City*, traced the history of the game in Rosario, singling out the visit of Nottingham Forest in 1905. The money raised from that match went to local families whose homes were lost after a flood of the Parana river. The English team won 5-0.

Taking pride of place in the exhibition was the Lionel Messi Room, with the player's shirts and a golden boot on display, with videos of his goals on constant rotation. To reach the Messi Room, visitors walked down a corridor, the walls of which had been covered with copies of faded old player-registration cards and read like the Rosario wall of fame. In the passport-size photos, one could make out young faces of current coaches such as Roberto Sensini and Mauricio Pochettino. Alongside the cards for other national-team players, such as Javier Mascherano, Martin Demichelis and Messi, is that of Angel Di Maria, handwritten and stamped in March 1995.

Legend has it that Di Maria's first club, El Torito, asked for just 26 footballs as the price Rosario Central had to pay to get the six-year-old on their books. Legend also has it that El Torito, where Sensini also started out and whose orange shirts pay tribute to the Holland team from the 1974 World Cup, never received those balls.

Upon doctors' orders, the family of the young Di Maria were advised that the hyperactive youngster should be given more exercise, and so he joined El Torito, before moving to Rosario Central.

Class act...the Benfica youngster beats Everton's Joseph Yobo in a Europa League tie

The issue of reimbursement over Di Maria's transfers crops up regularly. Transfers are the lifeblood for teams in any category in Argentinian football. Di Maria's subsequent moves – from Benfica to Real Madrid, followed by a British record £60million to Manchester United last summer – represented an important source of income for Central. Via the solidarity mechanism, the club are due two per cent of Di Maria's transfers. The amount that would trickle into the accounts at the stadium used in the 1978 World Cup, the Gigante de Arroyito, would be considerably higher had Central held on to the 20 per cent of the transfer rights as stipulated in the sale to Benfica.

The courts in Rosario are still investigating how and why Benfica initially paid €1million too much for the initial transfer, money which Central spent. In the subsequent negotiations the Portuguese club agreed to simply pay an extra €1m, after which Central then signed over the remaining 20 per cent of his transfer rights to the club.

> "Just as it is a dream for any player to move to Europe, so it is a dream of mine to return to Central"
>
> **Di Maria says he will return home one day**

"Just as it is a dream for any player to move to Europe," Di Maria said in September, "so it is a dream of mine to return to Central."

For many Argentinian players who do not lose sight of their roots, returning to the club that put them on the path of a career in European football is a priority.

Di Maria was once asked if his background and having grown up in the same city brought him close to Messi. "Not necessarily. Messi is Newell's, I'm Central," he said of the football rivalry that splits Rosario.

Di Maria made his debut at the age of 17, under Angel Zof, the legendary coach at Rosario Central who won three titles, coached over 600 games at the club and who passed away in November 2014.

Di Maria lasted just two years in the first team at Central, the club needing to cash in on their prospect. He appeared in less than 40 games and in that time played under

Early days...Di Maria (second left) in the Rosario Central youth set-up

MAR 21, 2010 — Exactly one year after their Portuguese League Cup triumph, Benfica retain the trophy by beating Porto 3-0.

MAY 9, 2010 — Celebrates with Oscar Cardozo as Benfica secure the Portuguese league title with victory over Rio Ave.

MAY 24, 2010 — Scores his first goal for Argentina, in a World Cup warm-up win against Canada in Buenos Aires.

JUL 3, 2010 — Argentina reach the World Cup quarter-finals in South Africa under Diego Maradona, but lose 4-0 to Germany.

King of Europe...celebrating Real Madrid's 2014 Champions League triumph

six coaches. Early on in his career at Rosario some local newspapers described him as an enganche, the trademark Argentinian position of the number 10, the playmaker. But his direct style and pace was far more suited to attacking from wide, and his performances soon had Benfica mark him out as the replacement for the outgoing Simao.

Di Maria arrived at Benfica at a time of chronic instability at the Lisbon club. On signing in the winter transfer window of 2007, he did little to endear himself to the Benfica faithful by explaining that the switch to Portugal was an ideal stepping stone to enable him to reach one of Europe's big clubs. But the comment revealed an important facet of the teenager's character: an absolute belief in his own talent.

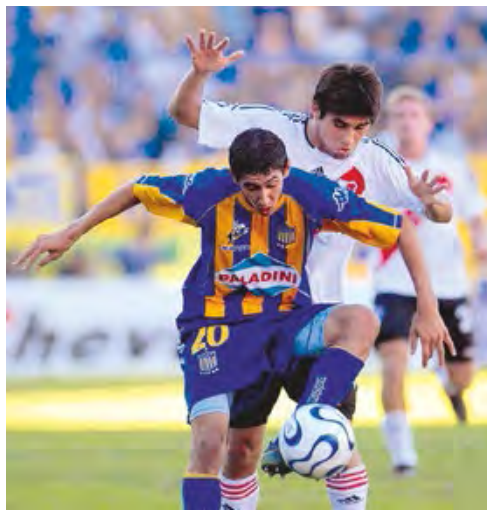
Big noise...after scoring for Benfica against Vorskla Poltava in the Europa League

He struggled to impose himself initially, despite showing flashes of his unique skill set. But the arrival of Jorge Jesus as Benfica coach was crucial. As Di Maria later acknowledged: "Jesus was the first coach who truly believed in me." And how the Argentinian repaid that faith.

A series of outstanding displays were a pleasure to behold as an exhilarating Benfica swept to the title in barnstorming fashion in 2010. The mesmerising, high-octane style installed by Jesus suited Di Maria down to the ground and his partnership with Fabio Coentrao on the left was unstoppable. In a season of numerous high points for the Eagles, Di Maria's astonishing performances against Everton in the Europa League and Leixoes in a Primeira Liga fixture were truly memorable, the Argentinian single-handedly running riot to destroy the opposition.

So good was Di Maria that season there was no way Benfica could keep hold of him. He had been right, the day he signed back in 2007, after all. But by now nobody held it against him.

At €30m, Di Maria was the most expensive signing of Real Madrid's first transfer window under new coach Jose Mourinho, who had arrived from Italy having won the Champions League with Internazionale. Di Maria quickly became



Close control...in action for Rosario Central

a key figure under Mourinho and then his successor, Carlo Ancelotti, culminating in a man-of-the-match performance as Real Madrid won a 10th European Cup in Lisbon last May.

It was Di Maria whose run made the second goal for Gareth Bale, one of a record 22 assists in all competitions during the course of the season.

In four seasons in La Liga, Di Maria created 49 goals, an assists figure that was second only to Messi. In all competitions, over 190 games, he scored 36 goals and provided 72 assists.

Such statistics make it easy to see why Carlo Ancelotti regarded Di Maria as such a crucial figure, but they do not tell the full story. Last season, Di Maria reluctantly agreed to a switch to left midfield in order to accommodate the arrival of £80m

JUL 7, 2010 — Signs for Real Madrid.

AUG 29, 2010 — Makes his full debut for Real in a 0-0 La Liga draw with Mallorca.

SEP 18, 2010 — Scores his first goal for his new club in a 2-1 La Liga win away to Real Sociedad.

APR 20, 2011 — Sets up the winner in extra time, but is sent off in the last minute as Real beat Barcelona 1-0 in the Spanish Cup Final.

JUL 16, 2011 — Substituted midway through second half as Argentina lose on penalties to Uruguay in Copa America quarter-final ater a 1-1 draw.

signing Bale. He played with huge energy and demonstrated tactical intelligence in a link role between defence and attack.

Ancelotti did want to lose Di Maria, especially after his role in Argentina's run to the 2014 World Cup Final in Brazil. But Di Maria fell foul of Madrid's internal politics and the power wielded by president Florentino Perez.

Colombia midfielder James Rodriguez had not been on Madrid's transfer radar until his stunning performances at the World Cup. Perez felt pressure to land a big-name signing to rival Barcelona's capture of Luis Suarez from Liverpool. In Toni Kroos, Madrid would welcome a World Cup winner, while Rodriguez added the glamour that has characterised both of Perez's spells in charge of the club.

Madrid made Di Maria a new contract offer that he felt compelled to decline. Perez claimed they had offered to make him the best-paid player at the club after Cristiano Ronaldo, but the feeling persisted that Di Maria felt he was not wanted. He lacked the glamour of the club's other stars. As Madrid daily *AS* declared in a headline: "Because he doesn't sell shirts."

Feel the love...after scoring for Real Madrid against Real Zaragoza in La Liga

> "My son was never appreciated [at Madrid]. It was like they did not want him at the club, they never showed affection"
> Di Maria's father, Miguel

And so, in late August, Di Maria moved to Manchester United for a British record transfer fee of £59.7m. "We wish him the best," Ancelotti said. "The club did everything possible to keep him but he decided differently."

Ironically, given his status in Madrid, Di Maria took United's number seven shirt previously filled by George Best, Eric Cantona, David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo. The Argentinian, as a star performer from the World Cup, was the lead attraction in a £150m spending spree that was designed to give new manager Louis Van Gaal the tools to restore the club to the top table of English football.

RIO REVISITED

Argentina continues to run through the what-ifs from the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro on July 12, 2014. What if Gonzalo Higuain had scored his chance early on? Or what if Rodrigo Palacio scored his chance late on? Or what if Messi or Sergio Aguero were in better shape for the tournament? Perhaps the most pertinent hypothetical question, however, is what if Di Maria had been fit?

As his game developed, especially at Real Madrid, so Di Maria became one of Argentina's most vital players, linking up the formidable strike trio of Messi, Aguero and Higuain, while also aiding the midfield and defence with his work rate.

In the World Cup, coach Alejandro Sabella put the handbrake on the direct counter-attacking tactics that had proved so effective before the tournament and Argentina never quite found their stride. It was Messi who drove them through the group phase with four goals. But, by his own admission, he felt exhausted in the later stages of the competition, and with neither Higuain nor Augero producing their best form, it was Di Maria who largely ▸

Backing...Argentina's 2014 World Cup coach Sabella labelled Di Maria a vital cog in the team

Race...tussling with Granit Xhaka of Switzerland in last year's World Cup

An injury rules him out as Real Madrid clinch their first La Liga title for four years with a 3-0 win away to Athletic Bilbao.

MAY 2, 2012

Despite winning the second-leg 2-0, Real crash out of the Champions League semi-finals 4-3 on aggregate to Borussia Dortmund.

APR 30, 2013

Scores the opening goal for Real as they beat Barcelona 2-1 to win the Spanish Cup Final.

APRIL 16, 2014

Sets up Gareth Bale's goal in the Champions League Final win over Atletico Madrid and is named man of the match.

MAY 24, 2014

His World Cup comes to a premature end after an injury in the quarter-final win against Belgium.

JUL 5, 2014

Signs for Manchester United.

AUG 26, 2014

Scores his first United goal, in a 4-0 Premier League win against Queens Park Rangers at Old Trafford.

SEP 14, 2014

became the side's main hope of progressing through the tournament. His late goal against Switzerland secured the route through to the quarter-finals, and though Higuain scored the solitary goal against Belgium, it was Di Maria who consistently performed throughout the tournament. Although Argentina perhaps produced their finest display of the tournament in the Final against Germany, it was without one of their most important players.

Di Maria also missed the Final in his first international tournament for Argentina, in which his reputation began to soar. The 2007 Under-20 World Cup in Canada is remembered in Argentina as the Aguero tournament, the striker winning the Golden Boot. From that squad, goalkeeper Sergio Romero would also graduate on to the 2014 full national squad.

It was a group of players valued in the local media at over $100m – an estimated figure after Mauro Zarate's transfer to Al Sadd in Qatar – and the coach Hugo Tocalli was continuing on the groundwork of Jose Pekerman that had proved so

Pain game...injuries have plagued Di Maria since his move to Manchester United

> "I will tell my grandchildren about when I won the Champions League, but most of all I will tell them that their grandfather played with Lionel Messi"
>
> **Di Maria on his Argentina team-mate**

Hero...an Under-20 World Cup winner in 2007

successful in the international youth teams. A muscle strain kept the impressive and explosive Di Maria out of Argentina's 2-1 win over Czech Republic in the Final.

A year later in the Beijing Olympics, Di Maria was surrounded by more players who would continue with him to form the backbone of the 2014 squad. Romero was still in goal, Ezequiel Garay, Pablo Zabaleta, Fernando Gago, Javier Mascherano, Ezequiel Lavezzi, Aguero and Messi were all present alongside Juan Roman Riquelme.

The Olympics is the one major football title that Brazil have yet to win, making the defeat to Argentina in the competition all the more painful. But while coach Sergio Batista had drafted over-23 players such as Mascherano and Riquelme into the squad, in the Final it was Di Maria's looped winning goal against Nigeria that secured the gold medal.

That Olympic-winning team, which retained the gold won at Athens 2004 under Marcelo Bielsa, proved to be the backbone of the team that under Diego Maradona would be overrun by Germany in the quarter-finals in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. A talented group of players was at its lowest ebb. Messi went 16 games without scoring, perhaps the most eloquent statistic – beyond the long inventory of famous quotes – about the Maradona reign.

Batista replaced his former team-mate Maradona for the 2011 Copa America which was an unmitigated disaster. The hosts were unable to defeat Uruguay in the quarter-final stage despite a numerical advantage for over half the match.

Under the new coach Sabella, Argentina's impressive attacking trio of Messi, Aguero and Higuain began to find understanding and synergy expected of such talents. And while Sabella would avoid questions about the absence of Carlos Tevez, he would regularly answer that as well as those three attackers, so too was Di Maria a vital cog in the machine. Sabella told *World Soccer* before the World Cup that Argentina "have the best player in the world, two exceptional strikers...but we also have Di Maria".

Sabella must not only rue not having his exceptional strikers and best player on their best form in Brazil, but also missing Di Maria for the Final.

"A letter arrived at 11am on the day of the Final," Di Maria told Argentinian radio in September. Real Madrid wrote to the Argentina FA, later confirmed by FA president Julio Grondona's son, requesting that Di Maria not play, having picked up an injury against Belgium. Pressure from the club added to Di Maria himself taking the decision not to risk further injury by playing.

After the tournament, Sabella stepped down as coach. For his successor Gerardo "Tata" Martino, Di Maria is still one of his most important players. Shortly after taking over, Martino said he wasn't worried about Di Maria missing out on Champions League football with his new club. "Maybe it would be better in a World Cup year," he joked. "He would be better rested."

Argentina can only wonder what would have happened in Rio de Janeiro had they been able to have, not only Messi, Aguero and Higuain, but also Di Maria fit and firing on all cylinders.

In September Di Maria reminded Argentina of what they had missed when he provided all four assists in an electric performance against Germany, albeit in a friendly.

Back in Manchester, Di Maria has yet to hit the heights with his new club that he experienced with Benfica and Real Madrid. A blistering start, including a fine goal against Leicester City, was compromised by a string of injuries. Van Gaal's ongoing search for a settled formation has seen Di Maria played in a central role

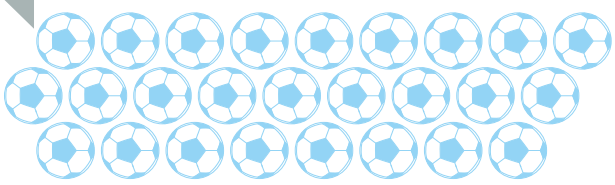
But, still only 26, there is plenty of time for Angel Di Maria to provided material for future museum curators back home in Rosario. **WS**

Disappointment... missing out on the World Cup Final

Angel DI MARIA

the numbers game

TWENTY SIX FOOTBALLS



The transfer fee Di Maria claims Rosario Central paid local side El Torito to sign him at just six years old

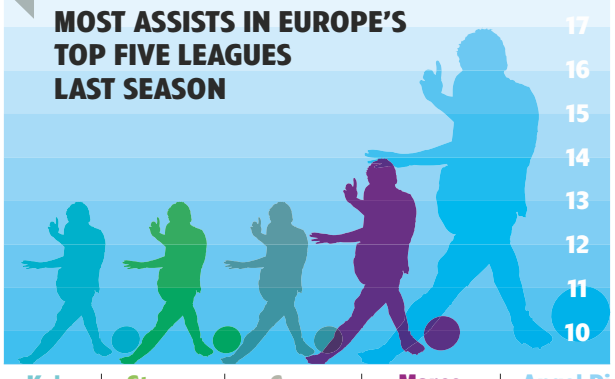
MINUTES

26

DI MARIA CREATED A GOALSCORING CHANCE FOR HIS REAL MADRID TEAM-MATES ONCE EVERY 26 MINUTES IN LA LIGA LAST SEASON

ASSISTANCE PLEASE!

MOST ASSISTS IN EUROPE'S TOP FIVE LEAGUES LAST SEASON

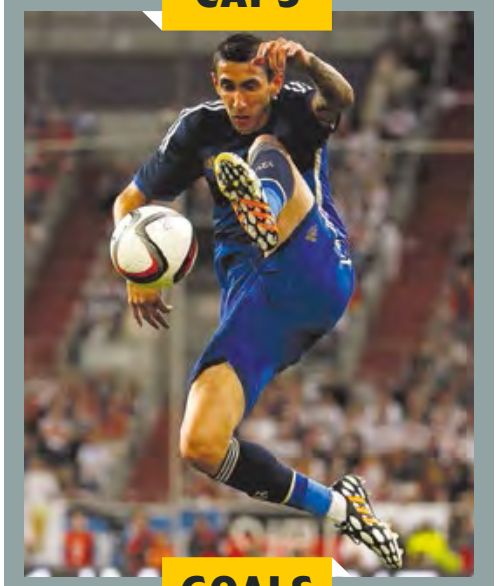


Koke	Steven Gerrard	Cesc Fabregas	Marco Reus	Angel Di Maria
Atletico Madrid	Liverpool	Barcelona	B Dortmund	Real Madrid

ARGENTINA

57

CAPS



GOALS

11

TALKING TRANSFERS

World's Most Expensive Players

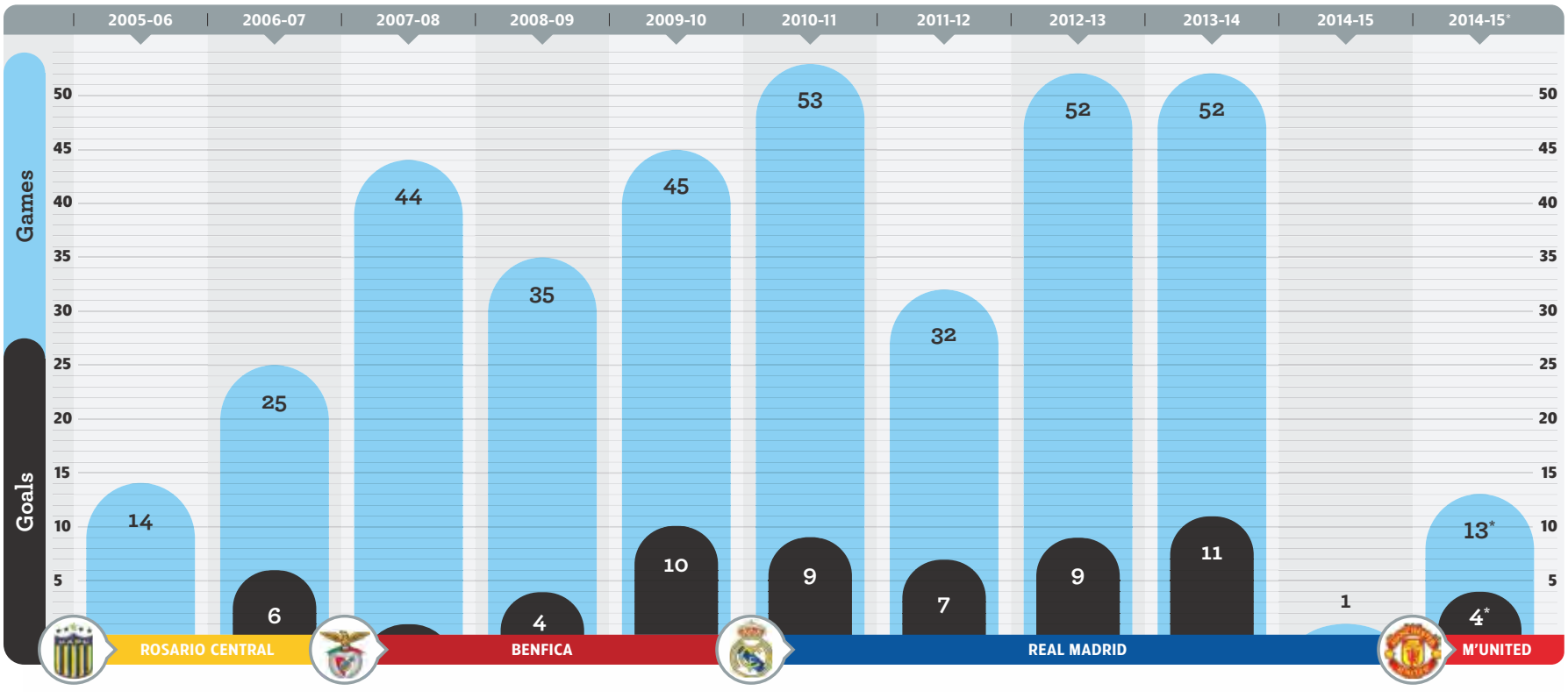
(* some sources claim Bale's fee was in excess of £80m)

NUMBER SEVEN SHIRT

DI MARIA is the latest United star to wear the Red number seven shirt, following the likes of George Best, Bryan Robson, Eric Cantona, David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo

HONOURS

CLUB		
1 Champions League	2014	
1 UEFA Super Cup	2014	
1 La Liga	2012	
2 Spanish Cup	2011	2014
1 Spanish Super Cup	2012	
1 Portuguese league	2010	
2 Portuguese League Cup	2009	2010
COUNTRY		
1 Under-20 World Cup	2007	
1 Olympic Gold	2008	



(*up to £ including 04.01.15)

The strong get stronger

Jonathan Wilson on why the quality is falling in Europe's premier club competition

Football has entered a new age, and this is the age of the super-club. Wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few and that is having a profound effect; not merely on who can win tournaments, but how football itself is played. More than anything else, it is the domination of those clubs that explains the recent trend away from defensive football.

The power of the super-clubs is perhaps best demonstrated by looking at the narrowing spread of teams who reach the Champions League semi-finals.

After five years of the European Cup, there had been 13 different semi-finalists. Moving forward in rolling five-year blocks, those 20 slots tended to be filled by 14 or 15 different teams – until the 1980s, when the diversity became even more marked and it was common for 16 or 17 different clubs to reach the semi-finals over a five-year period, reaching a peak of 18 in the five seasons up to and including 1986-87.

> "We don't have enough hard matches, so when it comes to one or two tough games we cannot match teams from a higher level"
>
> **Igor Biscan, once of Dinamo Zagreb, on why his side dominated in Croatia but struggled in Europe**

In the Champions League era, the figure began to fall, to a low of just eight sides in the five seasons up to and including 2008-09. Since then, there have been nine or 10 different clubs occupying those 20 places in each rolling period up to last season.

Crushed...Roma goalkeeper Morgan De Sanctis can't keep out Thomas Muller's penalty as Bayern Munich thrash their hosts 7-1 in October's Champions League group game

Occasionally a Borussia Dortmund or an Atletico Madrid will punch above their weight, but they have had to get used to seeing their best players sold off at the end of the season. Both have reacted positively to this, but the example of Dortmund this term suggests no side can thrive in the long term if it constantly has to replace two or three players each summer.

The ramifications of the super-clubs' strength are seen domestically. Bayern Munich again dominate the Bundesliga, while Juventus have been by some way the best side in Serie A for three or four seasons. Only Paris Saint-Germain's staggering ineptitude has created a title race in France, Chelsea and Manchester City again lead the way in England, and

Frustration...Biscan playing for Dinamo Zagreb

Spain is a battle of the usual big three.

There is a general lack of competitiveness and that has had a logical if unexpected effect on the latter stages of the Champions League.

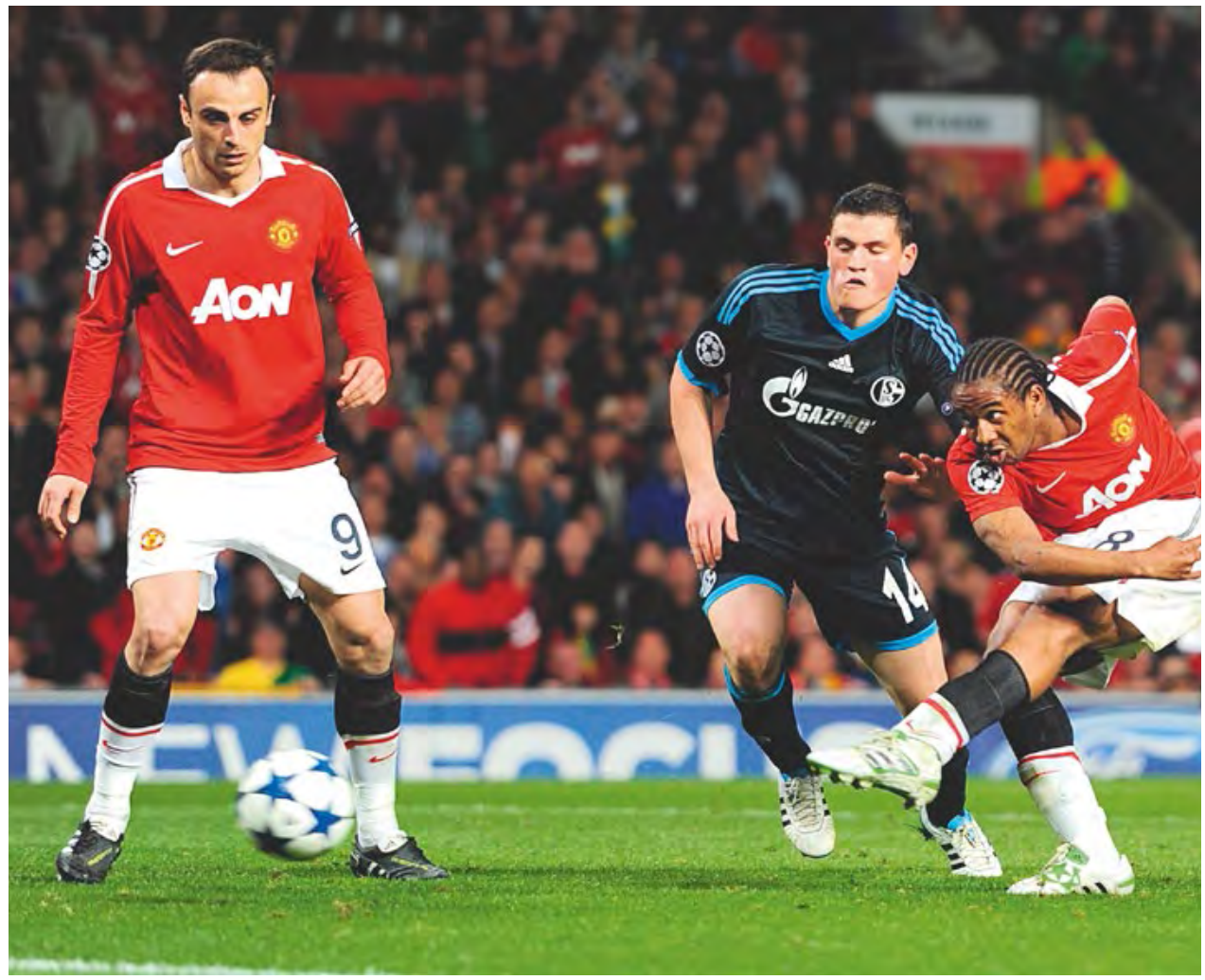
Six years ago, I interviewed Igor Biscan in Zagreb. He was winding down his career with Dinamo and was even more lugubrious than usual after another early exit from the Champions League.

"Every season it is the same story," he said. "We dominate domestically, but when we are close to entering the Champions League, we are not good enough. We don't have enough hard matches, so when it comes to one or two tough games we cannot match teams from a higher level."

Dinamo, he said, had forgotten how to fight. They sauntered through Croatian league games with the full-backs and midfielders bombing forward, and nobody worrying too much about stopping the opposition playing. It was about breaching defences that sat deep and in numbers. Actual competition was almost unknown.

The "Biscan Principle" is now beginning to be seen in more major leagues. After strutting through a Bundesliga campaign, with breaking their own records the only real challenge, is it any surprise Bayern found it difficult to adjust when they faced teams closer to their level? Last season they were humbled 4-0 at home by Real Madrid in the semi-finals. That in itself was reminiscent, both in style and margin of defeat, of the devastation they had inflicted on Barcelona in the semi-finals the previous year when winning 7-0 on aggregate.

The statistics bear this out. Over the past 20 seasons, the semi-finals have yielded an average of 9.7 goals. In each of the last five years there have been at least nine goals in the semi-final – which includes 14 in 2012-13 and 13 in 2010-11, although that was slightly inflated by the presence in the last four of Schalke, the weakest semi-finalists for some time, and



No shock...Anderson scores for Manchester United against surprise semi-finalists Schalke in 2011

who were predictably despatched 6-1 on aggregate by Manchester United. So recent semi-finals, from a historical point of view, have brought a higher than average number of goals.

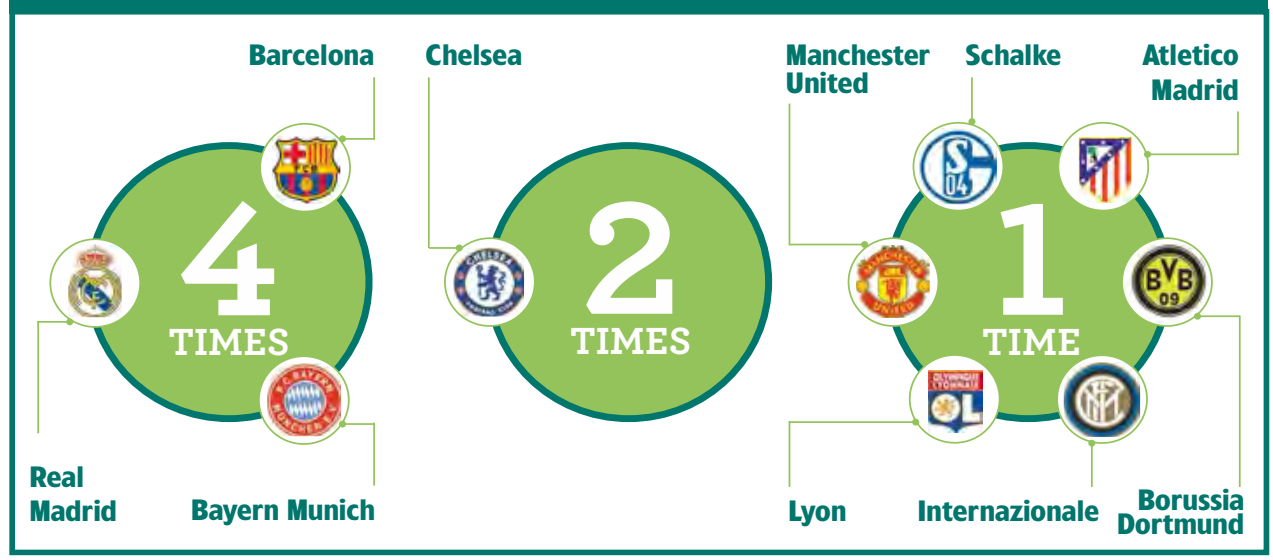
But what is really striking is the margins of victory. The five-goal aggregate by which Real beat Bayern last season is tied with the United–Schalke tie as the second-biggest in a semi-final in the past 20 years, behind only Bayern's 7-0 win over Barca.

Over the past four seasons, the combined margin of victory for both semi-finals was seven, one, eight and seven. You have to go back to 1996-97 for the last time there was a combined margin of victory even of six. Over the past 20 years the average in the semi-finals is 3.65: four of the past five seasons have exceeded that. Semi-finals have stopped being the cagey affairs tradition suggested they should be and have started producing emphatic victories.

Schalke's surprise progress to the semi-final in part explains that – but no one could claim Barcelona in 2013 or Bayern last season had somehow gone a round or two beyond their capacity. This, surely, is the "Biscan Principle" at play: teams used to winning, but who had effectively forgotten how to fight in an even contest. The relative ease of their domestic competition had softened them up and so, when momentum went against them, they had no way of hauling it back.

As the super-clubs' dominance continues, so this seems likely to become more of a trend. Until, that is, we reach what feels like the inevitable conclusion of modern football: that the super-clubs form a super-league. **WS**

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMI-FINALISTS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS



ClubFocus

AJAX

The Velvet Revolution

Former players, led by Johan Cruyff, are revitalising Ajax's famed youth academy

WORDS: Klaas-Jan Droppert

Congratulations...Klaassen celebrates after scoring against APOEL in the Champions League

AJAX
AEGON

The story of AFC Ajax over the last four years is full of contradictions. The club have won four consecutive Dutch titles but suffered early exits from European competition. There has been worldwide praise for their youth academy but a failure to produce a world-class striker since Patrick Kluivert in the early 1990s. And despite being labelled Europe's healthiest club in financial terms, a firm hand has been kept on the wallet when it comes to signing new players.

To understand the club's current predicament, it is vital to understand the importance of the past.

During the early 1970s, when Ajax won three European Cups, and the late 1980s and 1990s, when they won the European Cup-winners Cup, UEFA Cup and Champions League, their teams had one thing in common: they were based on home-grown talents playing the club's traditional 4-3-3 formation.

> "This isn't Ajax any more. It is worse than before Rinus Michels arrived in 1965. There should be a clean sweep"
> **Johan Cruyff plans his "Velvet Revolution" in 2011**

For Ajax, a return to their traditional ways is seen as the only way to compete with the European giants who are now funded by Russian oligarchs and Arab sheikhs. And the first step was taken by none other than the club's greatest player, Johan Cruyff.

The man ever synonymous with the No14 shirt which he wore so proudly for club and country has consistently been critical of the way Ajax has handled its legacy. In his weekly column in the Amsterdam-based *De Telegraaf*, Holland's biggest newspaper, Cruyff has pontificated on his favourite topic: the deplorable state of the youth department and the skills in which players were lacking even when they broke into the first team.

Irresistible force...Ajax fans gather outside the Amsterdam Arena to celebrate their 2013 Eredivisie title

In September 2011, Cruyff felt Ajax had hit rock bottom after being outclassed in a 2-0 defeat by Real Madrid. "This isn't Ajax any more," he wrote. "It is worse than the period before Rinus Michels came in 1965. There should be a clean sweep."

Cruyff especially disliked then-coach Martin Jol's abandonment of the traditional 4-3-3 system, with Jol preferring well-paid but past-their-prime players who arrived thanks to agents' connections and blocked the path to promising youth players.

But Cruyff knew the problems ran deeper than the youth system. His solution was to introduce improved methods of football education at the academy, with former players installed in key positions. He envisaged a model copied from Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

Ever since Cruyff initiated this "Velvet Revolution", Ajax have been making progress. At the De Toekomst ("the future") youth complex nearly all the coaches are former players, while some of the club's best performers of recent times – Marc Overmars, Edwin Van der Sar, Wim Jonk and Frank De Boer – are in charge.

However, the biggest gains so far from the new approach have been made off the pitch. Of course, current coach De Boer has done a stunning job by winning four consecutive titles, but the club's financial policy has been even more impressive.

According to influential financial analysts

We are Ajax... the team step out for another league clash

The future...children train at the youth complex

Guardians of the faith...Jonk (left) and Cruyff watch the youth team train

S&P Capital IQ, Ajax are the healthiest big club in Europe, topping 44 other European sides on solvency and economic viability. With no debts, they have been free to spend the estimated €95million collected from the transfers of Luis Suarez, Christian Eriksen, Jan Vertonghen and Daley Blind.

Most importantly, the club now has a policy of refusing to spend funds on mega transfers. The days of grabbing the cheque book to pay a €16m record sum on dysfunctional players like Miralem Sulejmani are well and truly over.

With that in mind it isn't surprising that transfer profits have not been used to buy players in an attempt to close the gap on Europe's big-spending clubs. In line with Cruyff's philosophy, the money will be invested in a youth academy that already is given an annual financial injection of €7m. Hans Wijers, chairman of the supervisory board, revealed the club will get a new state-of-the-art training ground as De Toekomst – opened in 1996 and based next door to the Amsterdam Arena – is rebuilt. He also hinted that Ajax might buy the Arena.

So the heart and soul of Ajax is their youth department once again. But is the money well spent? Wouldn't Ajax finish top anyway in a weak and inferior Dutch league? And what about the European results that mean Ajax have not been able to survive the Champions League group phase, followed by an early exit in the Europa League? Was the Velvet Revolution worth all the fuss?

"I hear that question quite often", says ex-international Jonk, now head of the youth department. "And I think it's an awkward question.

"There have been a lot of changes and our goal is to prepare as many youth players as possible for the first team.

"Considering the players that have already been delivered, I would say the ▸

CHAMPIONS OF EUROPE

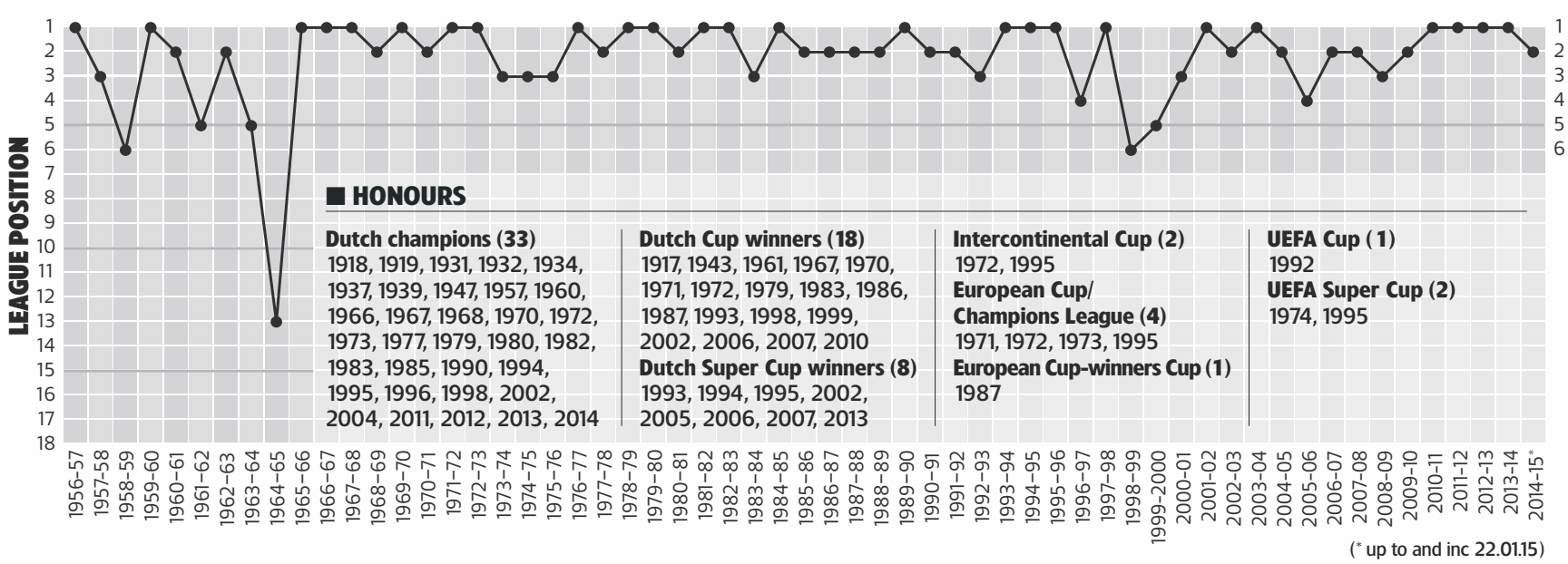
▲ **1971:** Gerrie Muhren raises his arms in triumph as a goal by Arie Haan (out of picture) clinches a 2-0 win over Panathinaikos at Wembley

◂ **1972:** Johan Neeskens, Haan and Ruud Krol (left to right) walk out for the Final in which two Johan Cruyff goals secured victory over Internazionale in Rotterdam

▸ **1973:** Three in a row as Barry Hulshoff hoists the trophy and Cruyff sports a Juventus shirt after the 1-0 defeat of the Italians in Belgrade

▾ **1995:** Patrick Kluivert (below left) scores the only goal late on in Vienna as Ajax overcome another Italian opponent, Milan

AJAX: EREDIVISIE POSITIONS 1956 TO 2015



HONOURS

Dutch champions (33)
1918, 1919, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1939, 1947, 1957, 1960, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014

Dutch Cup winners (18)
1917, 1943, 1961, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1979, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2010

Dutch Super Cup winners (8)
1993, 1994, 1995, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2013

Intercontinental Cup (2)
1972, 1995

European Cup/ Champions League (4)
1971, 1972, 1973, 1995

European Cup-winners Cup (1)
1987

UEFA Cup (1)
1992

UEFA Super Cup (2)
1974, 1995

(* up to and inc 22.01.15)

Flying the flag...fans get behind the team during the Champions League group game against Barcelona in November

contours of a new Ajax are visible. That's why we are focusing even more on the youth."

Despite the breakthrough of Joel Veltman, Anwar El Ghazi and Ricardo Kishna, Jonk expects more from other drafts. "Especially the age groups from eight to 12, and 12 to 16," says the former Ajax, Internazionale, Sheffield Wednesday and PSV midfielder. "They are the ones that should reach the first team in the future. But it would be a utopia to think the first team only contains self-educated players. There will always be players to be bought."

Jonk speaks to Cruyff on the phone twice a week, and Cruyff has had an impact on training. "We are making more training hours now and the priority is focusing on what a player needs," said Jonk. "That means working on their weaknesses. We also have intensified the individual training, based on technique.

"And we are working more specifically. Coaches from other sports like judo, athletics or triathlon have entered. Coaches of individual sports who work with our former players. Those two approaches form our view on top sport.

"This year we have started with coaches coaching different teams. The whole idea is that they will judge other teams than their own. That will give us new views and could be very interesting."

Cruyff recently stated that there is still space for progress; that players can still develop physically, mentally and technically. By deleting the mistakes they make at an early age, the pace will speed up and the game will be more attractive. He thinks that good drafts are arriving soon, from which Ajax could benefit.

But will the day come when an Ajax team, mainly containing homegrown players, is successful in Europe again? Wouldn't those players already have been lured away by the financially wealthy Premier League clubs as in the past?

"We must give our players the impression that they get the world's best football education at Ajax," reasons Jonk. "That there is no need to opt for money

Taking on the best... Niklas Moisander beats Lionel Messi

THE POWER CURVE

The key figures at Ajax

JOHAN CRUYFF
A Barcelona resident for most of the year but omnipresent in Amsterdam. As architect of the current structure, Holland's greatest player is a sounding board for the Ajax hierarchy. Plans to make them a top club again by improving the youth academy.

MARC OVERMARS
Technical director since June 2012 and responsible for transfers, the youth department and scouting. Has earned the club millions by keeping his hand on the wallet. With Jonk and Dennis Bergkamp, Frank De Boer's assistant, he forms the "technical heart" that guards the club's philosophy.

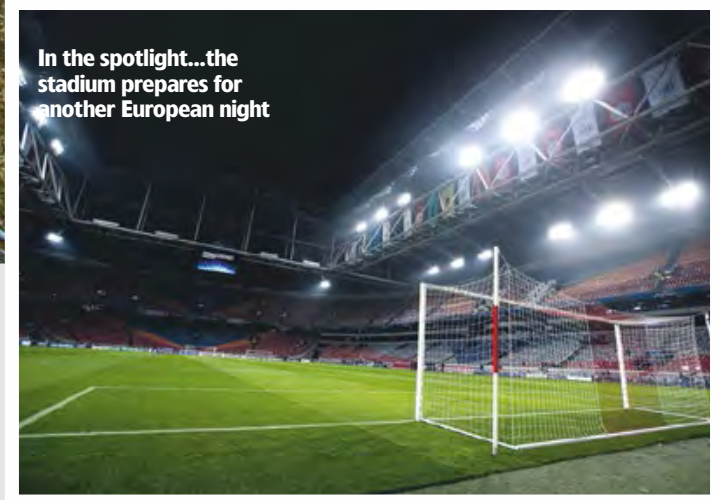
EDWIN VAN DER SAR
Rising star on the board. As marketing director negotiated an annual €8million sponsorship deal with cable company Ziggo. The former goalkeeper joined the board in late 2012 and mentored by Michael Kinsbergen to succeed him as general manager.

JEROEN SLOP
Financial director who is the only survivor of the Velvet Revolution. The accountant has been a board member since 1999. Mainly responsible for Ajax's healthy books.

WIM JONK
Head of the youth department and so in charge of the Ajax delivery room. Former midfielder is one of the fiercest supporters of Cruyff's philosophy and has an open-ended contract.

THE STADIUM

Home from home... the state-of-the-art Amsterdam Arena



In the spotlight...the stadium prepares for another European night

The Amsterdam Arena – officially titled the ArenA – was opened in 1996 as Ajax finally outgrew the homely De Meer stadium, where safety regulations had reduced the capacity to 19,000, with the club preferring to play home European games at the city's rundown but bigger-capacity Olympic stadium, built for the 1928 games.

The Arena, in south-east Amsterdam, was originally planned as part of the city's bid for the 1992 Olympics. When the games were awarded to Barcelona, the original plan was adapted for Ajax.

A retractable roof and underground car park were added to the design, while the club's De Toekomst academy moved next door. The famous red, lower-case stadium sign also made the journey from De Meer.

The roof, and a corresponding lack of natural light, caused initial problems with the pitch, which had to be relaid 15 times, while many older fans complained at the sterile atmosphere. Things improved when the F-side fans – named after a block at De Meer – moved into the same section.

The 53-000 seat Arena, which accommodates 63,000 for rock concerts, is a 15-minute metro ride from the centre of Amsterdam, while there is a direct link to Schipol airport.

The club's biggest rivals remain Feyenoord. It is a rivalry between Holland's two most successful clubs from the country's two biggest cities: the working-class port of Rotterdam and the cultural tourist centre of Amsterdam. Feyenoord were the first to win the European Cup, in 1970, but over the years they have grown resentful of the global reputation earned by Ajax following their success in the 1970s. The rivalry often spilled over into violence, most notably in 1997 when an Ajax fan, Carlo Picornie, was killed during a pre-arranged "meet" between hooligan gangs near a motorway lay-by.

The league meetings between the clubs are heavily policed, but Feyenoord's fans have attracted criticism for mocking Ajax's roots in Amsterdam's Jewish community.

Work of art...a mural around the arena

Spelling it out...the sign was brought across from the club's old De Meer stadium

at an early age. We should make them aware that they are in the right place when it comes to making the first team. However, that isn't always easy. I notice that some players are impatient. Especially when someone of their age is breaking through earlier. There is a danger that they would leave at loggerheads.

"For us it is vital to communicate well, to keep them calm because it would otherwise affect their performance. There is a personal plan for every player which should lead them to the first team. If they stick to it, then they have a good chance.

"Numerous examples have shown that an early departure doesn't end well."

Four years after the Velvet Revolution, Ajax are still making up for lost time. And although the first team's performances in Europe could be better, the results of the junior teams in the NextGen Series and the UEFA Youth League show that Ajax can compete with the best.

So Ajax will stick to Cruyff's plan, despite the fact that several former players such as Piet Keizer and Tsheu La Ling have said that the club should spend more money on contracting new players.

"When it comes to money we can't compete," said Jonk. "However, thanks to a certain way of play, we can.

"It's nice to win against Barcelona, as we did last season, but we have to do it more often. Repeating that against the top teams is what it's all about, that's the only way to the top. However, sometimes it also depends on having a good draft, if everything fits.

"Reaching a quarter-final or semi-final in the Europa League should be possible in the not so distant future. We are aware of the progress we still need to make, but there are also other factors involved.

"For instance, take last season. If Mario Balotelli hadn't been awarded a cheap spot-kick in the dying seconds then Ajax, not Milan, would have survived the group phase. And those who criticise us for not making progress in Europe would have been the first to say we had taken Ajax to the next level.

"Sometimes the difference between winning and losing is not that big." **WS**

Clearing the danger... the Ajax defence repel a Heerenveen attack

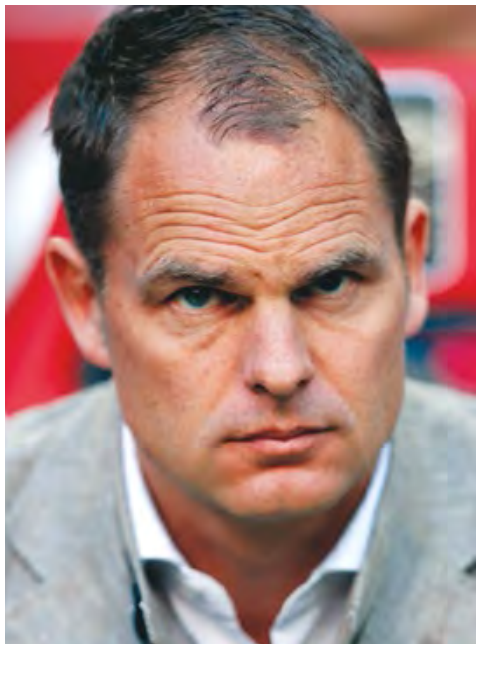
> "We must give our young players the impression they get the world's best football education here"
>
> **Ajax youth academy head Wim Jonk**

Talent spotter...Klaassen beats Internazionale's Raffaele Di Gennaro during the 2012 under-19 NextGen Series Final which Ajax lost 5-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw

THE KIT

HOME KIT **SECOND KIT**

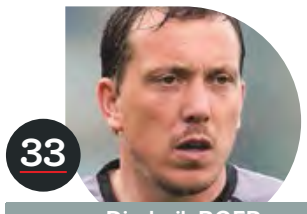
THE COACH



Frank DE BOER
Age 44 (15.05.70)
In charge of first-team affairs in Amsterdam since December 2010, when he replaced Martin Jol, having been a youth coach at the club as well as an assistant to the then-Holland boss Bert Van Marwijk. Has overseen four Dutch league title wins and been linked with a move away, although he agreed a four-year contract in 2013 that runs until 2017. As a player, he won 112 caps for Holland and was a key member of the 1995 Champions League-winning side. With his twin brother, Ronald, he moved to Barcelona in 1999 before spells at Galatasaray, Rangers and in Qatar.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS



33 Diederik BOER

Age 34 (24.09.80)
Arrived on transfer deadline day last summer having won the Dutch Cup with PEC Zwolle. Lost his little finger as a child.

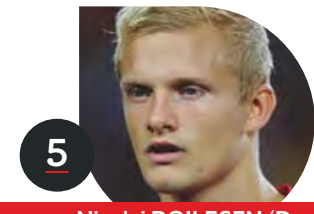
22 Jasper CILLESSEN

Age 25 (22.04.89)
Calm and reliable, he took over from Kenneth Vermeer as first choice for club and country, and was Holland's No1 at last year's World Cup.

DEFENDERS

27 Riechedly BAZOER

Age 18 (12.10.96)
Central defender who was lured from the PSV youth academy. Of Antillian descent, he is highly rated and seen as one for the future.



5 Nicolai BOILESEN (Den)

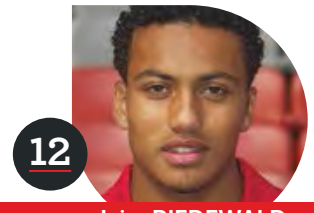
Age 22 (16.02.92)
Left-back who loves to get forward and join the attack but whose career has been hampered by injury over the past couple of seasons.

29 Ruben LIGEON

Age 22 (24.05.92)
Attacking right-back who is often overlooked by De Boer, who prefers Van Rhijn.

4 Niklas MOISANDER (Fin)

Age 29 (29.09.85)
Returned to the club in 2013 after spells with PEC Zwolle and AZ. His build-up play is good but he sometimes lacks concentration.

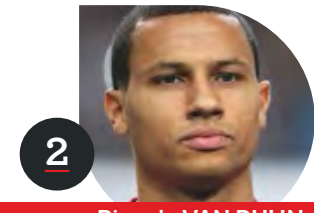


12 Jairo RIEDEWALD

Age 18 (09.09.96)
Attack-minded left-back who scored twice on his debut against Roda in December 2013 to turn what looked like a 1-0 defeat into a 2-1 win.

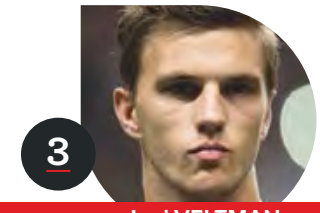
6 Mike VAN DER HOORN

Age 22 (15.10.92)
Central defender signed from Utrecht on a four-year deal in July 2013 after representing Holland at the Euro Under-21s.



2 Ricardo VAN RHIJN

Age 23 (13.06.91)
Full-back who came up through the youth system and is under contract until 2018.



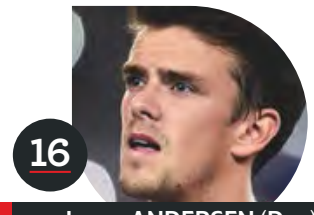
3 Joel VELTMAN

Age 23 (15.01.92)
Home-grown central defender who went to the Brazil World Cup, having made his debut in November 2013 against Colombia.

26 Nick VIERGEVER

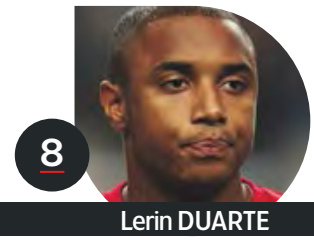
Age 25 (03.08.89)
Midfielder-cum-defender who was signed from AZ and brings experience to the team.

MIDFIELDERS



16 Lucas ANDERSEN (Den)

Age 20 (13.09.94)
Can play in midfield or on either wing. Arrived in 2013 for €1.5m from Danish club AaB, where he made his debut aged 16.

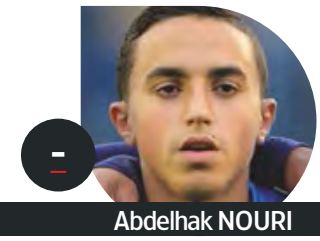


8 Lerin DUARTE

Age 24 (11.08.90)
Of Cape Verdean descent, he is a former Holland under-21 international and has been in the senior squad. Signed from Hercules in 2013 for €2.5m.

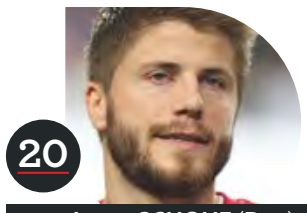
10 Davy KLAASSEN

Age 21 (21.02.93)
Attacking midfielder who scored on his debut against NEC in November 2011. Made his international debut against France in March last year.



- Abdelhak NOURI

Age 17 (02.04.97)
Holland youth international who extended his contract in January, tieing him to Ajax until June 2018.



20 Lasse SCHONE (Den)

Age 28 (27.05.86)
Playmaker who can also play on the wing, he is one of the most experienced squad members. Dangerous at free-kicks.

25 Thulani SERERO (SAf)

Age 24 (11.04.90)
Joined from South Africa's Ajax Cape Town. Omitted from his country's African Nations Cup squad – which De Boer regards as a bonus.

FORWARDS

21 Anwar EL GHAZI

Age 19 (03.05.95)
Lively right-winger who was let go by Feyenoord. Made his Ajax debut in August last year and signed a new five-year contract in December.

7 Viktor FISCHER (Den)

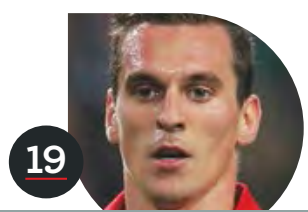
Age 20 (09.06.94)
A left-winger whose grandfather, Poul Pedersen, played on the right flank and won a silver medal at the 1960 summer Olympics.

11 Ricardo KISHNA

Age 20 (04.01.95)
Speedy left-winger who hopes to move on to one of Europe's giants. Came through the ranks and scored on his debut against AZ last season.

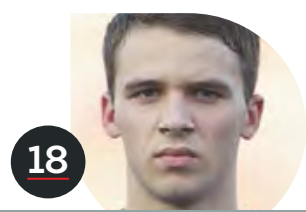
34 Queensy MENIG

Age 19 (19.08.95)
Holland under-20 winger of Surinamese descent who made his debut in September and scored in a 9-0 Dutch Cup win against JOS.



19 Arkadiusz MILIK (Pol)

Age 20 (28.02.94)
On loan from Bayer Leverkusen, a centre-forward with the ball control and footballing qualities to suit Ajax's play.



18 Robert MURIC (Cro)

Age 18 (12.03.96)
Winger signed from Dinamo Zagreb, although he never played for his former club due to a contract dispute.

9 Kolbeinn SIGTHORSSON (Ice)

Age 24 (14.03.90)
Previously with HK Kopavogur in Iceland and Dutch club AZ, his career has been disrupted by injury problems.

30 Richairo ZIVKOVIC

Age 18 (05.09.96)
Dutch youth international and youngest player to score for Groningen, aged 16 years 332 days, breaking Arjen Robben's record, before joining Ajax.

(All ages as of 30.01.15)

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

Loris KARIUS

AGE	21 (22.07.93)
CLUB	Mainz
COUNTRY	Germany

In a sentence
Arguably his country's premier goalkeeping prospect of the moment.

What they say
Ex-Germany, Hamburg and Eintracht Frankfurt keeper Uli Stein believes he is already international class, showering him with praise for his presence and authority. "The best course is for Karius to stay here and develop," says Mainz coach Kasper Hjulmand. "At his age, he has to play and here he has that chance."

The story so far
Started last season as Mainz's third choice but by the start of 2014 he had definitively displaced both Heinz Muller and Christian Wetklo. His star continues to rise this term and in November he won his first German under-21 cap.

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT KARIUS

- Began in Ulm and Stuttgart's schoolboy and youth ranks, then spent two seasons at Manchester City before coming home to play for Mainz. Still in touch with ex team-mates Joe Hart, Edin Dzeko and Mario Balotelli.
- Growing up his idol was former Bayern Munich and Germany keeper Oliver Kahn.
- Former Mainz coach Thomas Tuchel once banished him to the amateurs for not training with sufficient intensity.

The next steps
Despite strong interest from the likes of Borussia Dortmund, Hertha Berlin, Liverpool and Arsenal, he has wisely opted to keep his powder dry, signing a new contract to keep him at the Coface Arena until 2018. "It was a decision of the heart," he says.

Strengths
Consistency, self-assurance and high levels of concentration. Outstanding shot-stopper, commands his box well and is very effective facing down an opponent in one-on-ones.

Weaknesses
He can be a little impulsive, too unaware of risk. While his distribution has improved a lot, he does not always seem at ease with the ball at his feet.

Bill HAMID

DC United & USA
The first DC United academy player to turn professional at the club – signing on the dotted line in 2009 – he was deservedly elected MLS Goalkeeper of the Year last term and must be in contention for a regular spot in Jurgen Klinsmann's national squad. Just 24 years old, he has time as well as talent on his side.

Geronimo RULLI

Real Sociedad (Spa) & Argentina
New Sociedad coach David Moyes prioritises defensive solidity, and in the Argentinian he has the real goalkeeping package: spectacular, secure, good on the ball and excellent in his reflex stops, well-timed dashes from goal and positioning. Came to Europe after shining for multiple South American champions Estudiantes.

Yvon MVOGO

Young Boys & Switzerland
Born in Cameroon and raised in Switzerland, the 20-year-old was the subject of an international tug-of-war before plumping for the Europeans in November. His club career took off following an injury to Marco Wolfli, who snapped an Achilles tendon mid-way through last season.

Mattia PERIN

Genoa & Italy
Italy's third-choice in the 2014 World Cup was caught drink-driving in November, but is more circumspect in his sporting life. Regarded as the heir apparent to Gigi Buffon, he has a nice line in self-deprecation, claiming: "I once thought I was more likely to be a hotel porter than keeper for Genoa and the national team."

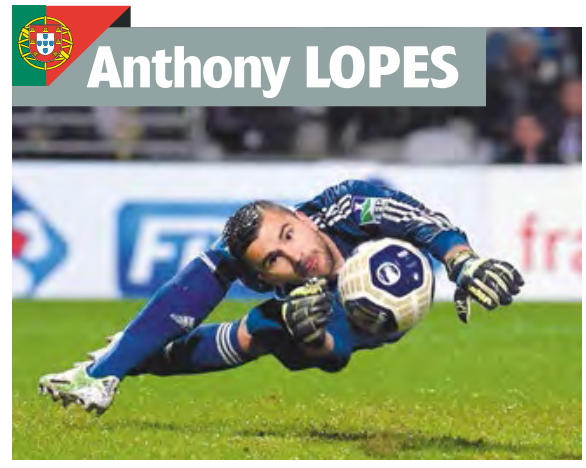
Alphonse AREOLA

Paris Saint-Germain & France
A world champion with France's under-20s in 2013, the PSG academy graduate has been earning rave reviews out on loan – with Lens last term he was voted the best keeper in Ligue 2. And he is proving just as valuable this term on loan at top-flight Bastia. Born in Paris to Filippino parents, he has good reason to be hopeful of evolving into a PSG starter in the not-too-distant future.

Yuri LODYGIN

Zenit & Russia
Along with team-mates Alexander Kerzhakov and Andrey Arshavin, he made the top 20 in a recent list of Russia's most popular present-day sportsmen. He is having a fine season and is making a habit of keeping clean sheets. Of Greek lineage, he previously played for Skoda Xanthi.

Anthony LOPES



Lyon (Fra) & Portugal
Lyon's challenge for the Ligue 1 crown is due in no small part to the Portuguese under-21 international who, in 18 months, has gone from strength to strength, brimming with sharp reactions, fearlessness and great anticipation. Formerly Hugo Lloris' understudy at the club and like him is especially quick coming off his line. Has a good penalty-saving record as well.

Matheus MAGALHAES

Braga (Por) & Brazil
The 22-year-old has taken to European football like a duck to water since arriving in Portugal last summer from Brazilian second-tier side America Mineiro. Impressive in October's 2-1 victory over Benfica, he should be featuring for the *Selecao* some time soon.

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT NEVES

- The goal he scored on his Porto debut, against Maritimo in August, made him the youngest league marksman in the club's history, at 17 years and 155 days.
- He is the youngest Portuguese to appear in a Champions League game, either an eliminator or group game, edging out Cristiano Ronaldo by one month earlier this season.
- He comes from the town of Mozelos, 20km south-east of Porto. All his family are unconditional fans of the club, including his father, Jose, who was a decent amateur midfielder in his day.

Ruben NEVES

AGE	17 (13.03.97)
CLUB	Porto
COUNTRY	Portugal

In a sentence
Defensive midfielder or engine-room regulator who is known as the "New Paulo Sousa" after the former Portugal captain and Champions League winner with Borussia Dortmund.

What they say
Luis Castro, coach of Porto's reserve side: "You can talk about his technical and tactical talent, but more than that, he has extraordinary mental strength. He approaches the game with incredible composure"

Former Porto captain and goalkeeper, Vitor Baia: "I'm delighted to watch such a youngster, one with so much maturity and ability."

The story so far
A shining light at Porto from the age of eight, he was initially supposed to play for the club's B team this season. But those plans were quickly shelved when new coach Julen Lopetegui caught a glimpse of him on the training ground and promptly inducted him into the senior squad, deploying him to excellent effect in both the Portuguese top flight and Champions League. Skippered Portugal to the semi-finals of the European Under-17 Championship last year.

The next step
Simply to keep up the good work. To consolidate his pre-eminence for Porto, impress with the Portuguese Under-21s at the European finals in June and hopefully lay the foundations for a senior international call-up. While Liverpool, Juventus and Milan are reported to be monitoring him closely, no exit visas are expected for at least two years. Porto is his club. The rest will take care of itself.

Strengths
- His precision passing, always preferring incisive forward passes to crab-like lateral distribution.
- Vision, tactical awareness and pronounced work ethic.
- Powerful right-footed shooting.

Weaknesses
- A lack of physical robustness; Porto recently told the *OJogo* newspaper that they aim to beef him up with a specific conditioning regime.
- Heading.

Iuri MEDEIROS

Arouca, on loan from Sporting Lisbon
Recently loaned out by Sporting – where he was featuring for the B team – to top-flight Arouca until the end of the season, the 20-year-old winger as been widely touted as the "next big thing" in Portuguese football and seems to have all the superstar ingredients: the wonderful left-foot, rare creativity, long-range shooting power and dynamism. An under-21 international, he hails from the island of Faial in the Azores and was groomed for fame from the age of nine at Sporting's academy at Alcochete.

Eduardo SALVIO

Benfica
The Argentinian right-winger, previously with Buenos Aires club Lanus and Atletico Madrid, never misses an opportunity to declare his undying love for Benfica, and their fans no doubt feel the same way about him, sent into raptures by his forceful play out wide, crossing ability from the byline and eye for goal. Known as "Toto", he idolises ex-Boca Juniors playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme, though probably has more in common with bullish Paris Saint-Germain wide man Ezequiel Lavezzi.

Andre CARRILLO

Sporting Lisbon
Lively and enterprising right-winger or second striker who finally looks set to make the transition from "kid with potential" to genuine class act, at long last shedding the image of the fitful and lightweight dilettante. Outstanding against Chelsea in the Champions League this term, he was signed from Alianza Lima in May 2011.

DANILO

Porto
Over the past three or four seasons, no Porto player has impressed so often as the Brazilian right-back and no wonder leading clubs in England and Spain have him on their wish-list. Barcelona marked the 23-year-old as successor to Dani Alves but their FIFA-imposed transfer ban means a deal now looks off. Libertadores Cup winner with Santos in 2011 and silver medallist at the London Olympics.

Ricardo ESGAIO

Sporting Lisbon
The Portuguese under-21 international's strongest suit is his complete and utter adaptability, his flair for delivering the goods in absolutely any right-sided role: full-back, wing-back or out-and-out winger. The subject of a €45million release clause, he has yet to establish himself as a regular starter for Sporting, but soon will be.

Oliver TORRES

Porto, on loan from Atletico Madrid, Spa
He says his game has improved considerably since coming to Portugal and no one could disagree. Rather than a bit-part role in Madrid, he is enjoying much more playing time with Porto and this has worked wonders for the 20-year-old's confidence and effectiveness. Two-footed midfield maestro was a European champion with Spain's under-19s in 2012 and surely full international honours will come.

Bernard MENSAH

Vitoria Guimaraes
With an average first team age of 22-23, high-flying Vitoria Guimaraes are relying very much on youthful hunger and exuberance and in the 20-year-old Ghanaian attacking midfielder they have a surfeit of such qualities. At Guimaraes since 2012 – arriving from the Feyenoord Ghana soccer school – he combines limitless stamina, aggression, good technique and electrifying breaks.

DEYVERSON

Belenenses
Belenenses must be relieved they did not offload the rangy Brazilian striker last spring. Plagued by injury in his first season following a July 2013 move from Benfica's reserves, he was in real danger of being cut adrift, but finally reprieved. He has been making up for lost time this term with a Primeira Liga goal blitz. Strong in the air, he is almost unknown in his native land, never playing higher than in the third tier of the Rio de Janeiro championship before heading for Portugal in summer 2012.

Profile: Carlo Ancelotti

The farm boy with his feet on the ground

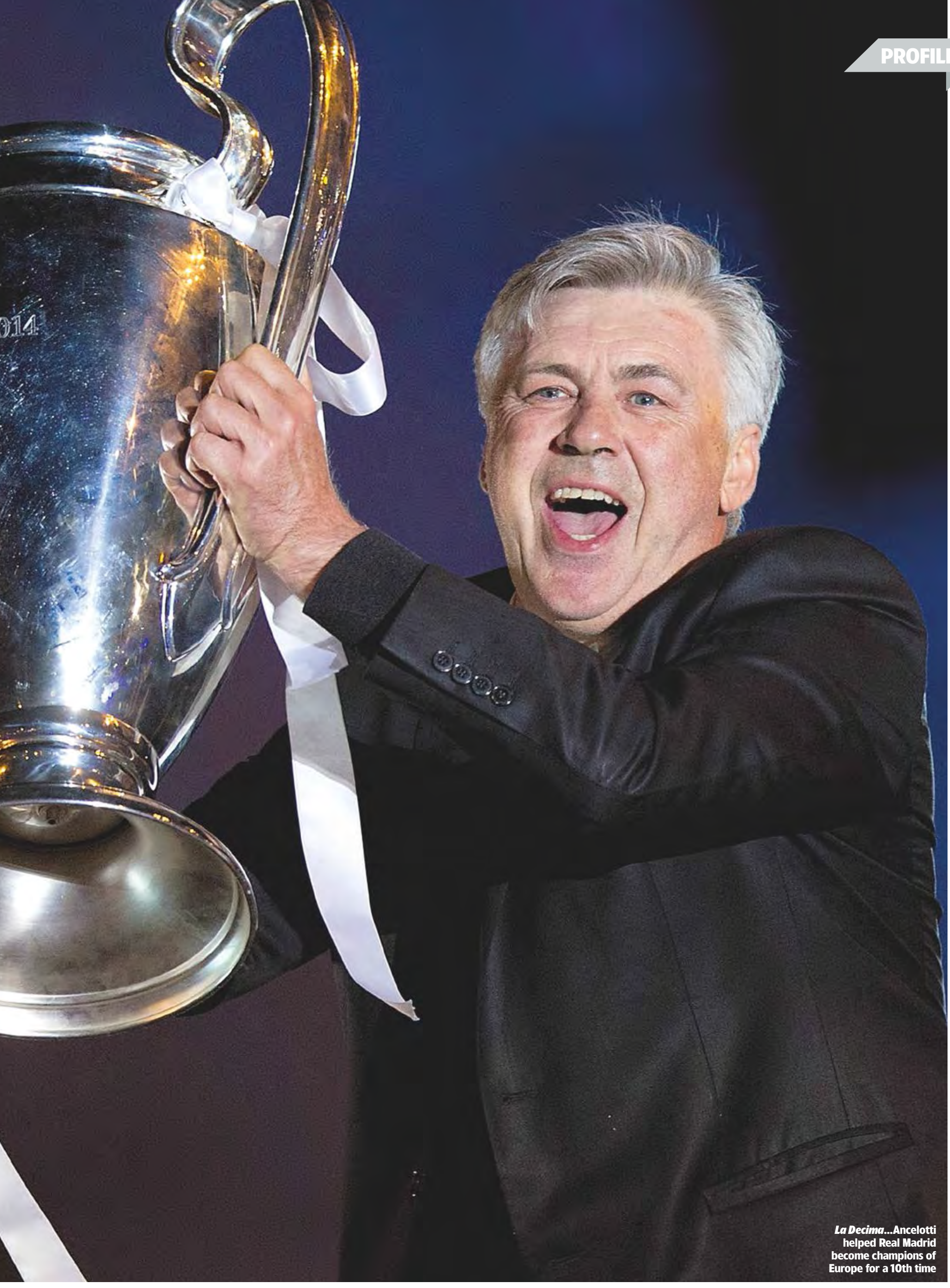
Having won three Champions Leagues and titles in Italy, England and France, the Real Madrid boss is Europe's most successful coach

WORDS: Paddy Agnew

If you talk to people who knew Carlo Ancelotti long before he became one of the world's great football coaches, they all say much the same thing. Basically, he is a decent guy, the son of a *contadino* – a small farmer – with his feet very firmly on the ground.

Ancelotti once said that the happiest day of his childhood was the day when they slaughtered the pig.

He grew up near Reggiolo in Emiglia Romagna on an eight-hectare farm where his sharecropper father, Giuseppe, grew olives, maze, vines, sugar beet and kept 10 milking cows, some hens and an old Fiat 21 tractor.



***La Decima*...Ancelotti helped Real Madrid become champions of Europe for a 10th time**

stayed with him, as indeed has his farm-boy sense of humour. Once, while coach at Parma, he was sent off by no less than Pierluigi Collina after the referee had given a penalty against him and Juventus.

Furious, he asked the official for an explanation. "I could lip read you calling me a bollocks," answered Collina, to which Ancelotti replied: "No, no, I never said that. But I did think it."

Around 20 years ago, US reporter Greg Burke, the current communications advisor to the Vatican's secretary of state, opted to indulge his lifelong interest in football by writing an inside account of a top Serie A team's season. Burke sent off three faxes: one to Milan coach Fabio Capello, another to Juventus boss Marcello Lippi and a third to Ancelotti at Parma.

Parma and Ancelotti were the only ones to reply. Even though he was at the beginning of his coaching career, Ancelotti hardly needed the hassle. In his first two seasons as a coach he had masterminded

"He's the best coach I've had in my career up until now. He's given me what others haven't been capable of"
Cristiano Ronaldo on Ancelotti

Reggiana's promotion to Serie A in 1996 and followed that by taking Parma to second place, behind Juventus, in Serie A in 1997. He was clearly a guy on the way up.

So why did he agree to sit down and talk with Burke just about every week for the entire 1997-98 season? No money changed hands. Burke says simply that "Carlo did it because Carlo is basically a decent guy", with the result being the immensely readable *Parma: Notes From A Year In Serie A*.

Not, mind you, that Ancelotti gave Burke an American-style access to the dressing room and team talks. When the reporter proposed this, Ancelotti replied simply: "Look, Greg, I don't even allow the owner [Calisto Tanzi] into the dressing room. If you were to ask Capello for that access, you know how long it would take him to tell you to go fuck yourself? About three seconds."

Respect...with Bale

If there is one thing all professional footballers love, it is a coach who tries to protect them, who even in this multi-media world still manages to shut, at least metaphorically, the dressing-room door on the outside world.

When all-conquering Real Madrid's 22-match winning run came to an abrupt halt in early 2015 with defeats by Valencia and Atletico Madrid, fingers were inevitably pointed at some of the club's most galactic stars. In his phlegmatic way, Ancelotti took to the wicket immediately, explaining that "there is no crisis", that he was perfectly happy with Gareth Bale's recent form and that, no, Cristiano Ronaldo does not have a knee problem. Little wonder goalkeeper Iker Casillas said Ancelotti "is a better coach than [Jose] Mourinho".

Casillas has, of course, all sorts of reasons for praising the Real Madrid coach who plays him and cursing the one who dropped him. But he suggests that the big difference between the two great coaches is that Ancelotti, unlike the "Special One", had a playing career at the highest level.

Even if, all those years ago, Ancelotti told

Glory...a European Cup-winner with Milan in 1989

Team work...Ancelotti, assistant Clement (centre) and Zinedine Zidane

Burke that his experience as a player "isn't really a lot of help as a coach", there is little doubt that having won two European Cups playing with arguably the best club in the world at the time – Milan, from 1987 to 1992 – still counts for much.

When it comes to the big matches, he has been there, he knows the pressures, he finds the right words to say. Call it a simple case of man-management skills.

Like many players before him, Ancelotti readily admits that it was much easier just being a player. With his *contadino* good sense, he tended to take big games in his stride as a player, rarely getting nervous or fussed beforehand. From the moment he moved into management, however, he developed serious tension on big match days. Not, mind you, that fans all over the world would notice any of this, given his usually non-histrionic touchline behaviour.

FACT FILE

Carlo Ancelotti

AGE
55 (10.06.59)

PLACE OF BIRTH
Reggiolo, Italy

PLAYING CAREER
Parma (1976-79)
55 games/13 goals
Roma (1979-87)
227 games/17 goals
Milan (1987-92)
160 games/11 goals
Italy (1981-91)
26 games/1 goal

HONOURS
Roma
Serie A 1983
Italian Cup 1980, 1981, 1984, 1986
Milan
European Cup 1989, 1990
Intercontinental Cup 1989, 1990
UEFA Super Cup 1989, 1990
Serie A 1988, 1992
Italian Super Cup 1988

COACHING CAREER
Reggiana (1995-96)
Parma (1996-98)
Juventus (1999-2001)
Milan (2001-09)
Chelsea (2009-11)
Paris Saint-Germain (2011-13)
Real Madrid (2013- present)

HONOURS
Milan
Champions League 2003, 2007
Club World Cup 2007
UEFA Super Cup 2003, 2007
Serie A 2004
Italian Cup 2003
Italian Super Cup 2004
Chelsea
Premier League 2010 (*above*)
FA Cup 2010
FA Community Shield 2009
Paris Saint-Germain
Ligue 1 2013
Real Madrid
Champions League 2014
Club World Cup 2014
UEFA Super Cup 2014
Spanish Cup 2014

Low point...the 2005 Champions League Final collapse to Liverpool

Curiously, however, before he set out on the road to London, Paris and now Madrid, few Italian critics would have told you that Ancelotti was destined to become one of the greatest coaches in the world. Even though he had won one title (2004) and two Champions Leagues (2003, 2007) in eight seasons with Milan, he was seen more as a good, solid coach than a miracle worker.

Part of the reason is that his name was associated with some of Italian club football's worst defeats in the first decade of this century.

Above all, he was the man in charge when Milan threw away a 3-0 half-time lead to lose to Liverpool in the 2005 Champions League Final in Istanbul.

A year before that Milan had beaten Deportivo La Coruna 4-1 at home in a Champions League quarter-final, only to crash out 4-0 in the return leg in Spain.

Back in 1999, as coach of Juventus, even scoring two goals in the first 11 minutes of a Champions League semi-final return leg at home to Manchester United could not avoid defeat.

In all these cases, critics adjudged Ancelotti guilty of a most un-Italian crime: the failure to hold on to a winning lead, the failure to lock up the defence and throw away the key. But that "failure", if indeed it was one, probably owed much as anything to Ancelotti's basic belief in playing good football.

Burke recalls being with Ancelotti in his sitting room in rural Emilia Romagna watching Morocco draw 2-2 with Norway on the opening day of the 1998 World Cup finals. Ancelotti was openly jeering the Norwegians' less-than-refined football. As one of their players belted the ball 60 yards downfield to nowhere, Ancelotti commented: "I don't know what that is, but it is not football."

Burke was also amazed that same day to note how Ancelotti had stopped to phone Croatian midfielder Mario Stanic, a Parma player, just to wish him good luck for the tournament. Ancelotti later told him that another of his players, France defender Lilian Thuram, had rung him shortly after scoring two goals against Croatia to win a dramatic World Cup semi-final 2-1. The link with his players obviously goes both ways.

Inevitably, Ancelotti's managerial story is the story of a career that almost fell at the first fence.

Having spent three highly informative

Turnaround...Juan Carlos Valeron scores as Deportivo overcome a 4-1 first-leg deficit to beat Milan

years as number two to Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi, immediately after his retirement as a player in 1992, Ancelotti was offered the job of coaching Serie B club Reggiana in 1995. At first, things did not go well and after two months of poor results, some players were openly critical of his methods.

Ettore Gandini, a reserve goalkeeper in the Reggiana squad, recalls that Ancelotti arrived with very specific ideas about a synchronised elastic defence, where all the players had to co-ordinate their movements. It would all look a bit old hat now, but it took some of his players a while to learn the movements, to use the offside trap. This was something that he had brought with him from his experience as a player with Sacchi at Milan and as his right-hand man with Italy.

By the end of the season the message had got through and Reggiana recovered to win promotion to Serie A, thus clearly establishing their new young coach as a man with a future.

Gandini recalls Ancelotti as being someone very "prepared", who left nothing to chance and above all who got on well with his players. "Carlo is the son of a sharecropper farmer, he is a guy with his feet firmly on the ground," says Gandini. "He is also very loyal.

"I remember, some years after I had stopped playing, going to watch Juventus train one day. I was in Turin for a golf competition, I think, and I was curious to see Juventus train.

Easy...Ancelotti never had any problem with Ibrahimovic at Paris Saint-Germain

"It was the 1998-99 season and Ancelotti was preparing for a Champions League game. I went along like any fan, just to watch from the sidelines at the old Stadio Comunale in Turin.

"But Ancelotti saw me and immediately called on the ground staff to open the gate on to the pitch and let me in. We chatted while the team trained and then he took me into the dressing room.

"In the end, I spent about three hours with him at the stadium. That is the sort of genuine guy he is."

Curiously, Ancelotti had anticipated something of his managerial philosophy right at the very beginning. In Italy, Serie A coaches have to have a federation licence. In other words, even if you have been a top-class player, you cannot sit on the bench and call the shots just because you know the game inside out.

So, year after year, famous ex-players turn up at the federation's coaching centre of Coverciano in Florence to earn their qualification by doing what, in effect, amounts to a post-grad masters degree at a very exclusive third-level institution.

In his final thesis, Ancelotti suggested that fans want more "spectacular" football, criticising the classic Italian defensive game. He wrote: "In the last few years in Italy we have paid a lot of attention to defensive tactics.

"A lot of managers have spent a greater part of their time trying to find effective solutions to block or interrupt the offensive capabilities of their opponents. The need for clubs to have positive results right away and managers' fear of being fired have accentuated this aspect of the game.

"It is difficult to find teams, whether they play man-to-man or zone, which do not

In the chair...thrown into the air by his players after Real's Champions League victory over Atletico Madrid last season

> "When I went to the Santiago Bernabeu trophy room I said to the president that there was one cup missing and that we should try to get it this season"
>
> **Ancelotti on his first day at Real; 11 months later he won the Champions League**

ANCELOTTI'S CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

INFLUENCES

ARRIGO SACCHI
After five successful seasons at Milan, it seemed only natural that Ancelotti's first coaching experience would be as number two to Sacchi, who by 1992 was Italy's national team coach.

In its time, Sacchi's football represented a revolution for the Italian game, with its insistence on an 11-man attacking game, maximum possession and use of the offside trap – all in total contrast to the then-dominant defence-based game.

In his thesis for his coaching licence, Ancelotti wrote: "It is fundamental to have a tactical plan in which the 11 players move in a synchronised fashion...If when you make a film, you have to follow a script...in football too, there is also a kind of script and a player will be better in as much as he manages to interpret it, enriching it with his own variations."

It could have been Sacchi talking.

NILS LIEDHOLM
The iconic Swede was the first big-name coach to want Ancelotti as a player, bringing him to Roma in 1979. Years later, Ancelotti said that Liedholm would have done a better job at Milan than he did with a squad that contained such great names as Maldini, Cafu, Pirlo, Seedorf, Crespo and Shevchenko.

According to Ancelotti, Liedholm favoured players with skill and his sides went out to play good football rather than to stop their opponents.

BRUNO MORA
Mora coached Ancelotti in his days as a youth-team player at Parma. When Ancelotti returned to Parma as coach in 1996, Mora was one of those to tell the fledging boss that their new young goalkeeper, a certain Gianluigi Buffon, was a "phenomenon".

STAFF

PAUL CLEMENT Assistant coach
During a recent "open day" for journalists at Real's Ciudad Deportiva centre, Ancelotti described the role of his 43-year-old English No2 thus: "The thing about Paul is that he knows about 50,000 different training drills."

With Ancelotti at both Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain, Clement is the man who does the day-to-day coaching, the guy with the stopwatch in his hand and who co-ordinates all the statistical information gathered by Real about its ultra-expensive squad.

Ancelotti delegates plenty of responsibility to him, secure in the knowledge that he will keep his players sharp and match ready.

FERNANDO HIERRO Assistant coach
An iconic figure who, for 14 seasons, was an outstanding central defender for Real.

Now fulfils the role previously occupied by Zinedine Zidane. He is the charismatic former great who sits down with a star player to put an arm around his shoulder and tell him it will be all right on the night.

VILLIAM VECCHI Goalkeeper coach
The 66-year-old was with Ancelotti throughout his days as Milan coach and represents a very obvious link to the past.

However, those who know the club well argue that one winning aspect of Ancelotti's handling of the Real job has been that he has not created a "Little Italy", a closed shop of only Italian advisors around him. That accusation was made after he appointed both his son, physio Davide, and his son-in-law, nutritionist Mino Fulco, to the Real staff. Ancelotti denies the allegation, claiming both are among the best the market could offer him. As for Vecchi, he is at Real not because he is Italian, but because of his huge experience and that he enjoys Ancelotti's total confidence.

have a good defensive organisation".

This is hardly Pullitzer Prize-winning copy, but it does give a flavour of the younger Ancelotti mindset. In the end, he got his coaching licence and was awarded top marks for his opus magnus, entitled *Offensive Movements In A 4-4-2 System Of Play.* Mind you, the federation could hardly have done much else because just a few weeks earlier, with a "provisional licence", he had guided Parma to second place in Serie A.

Given his winning ways with a whole host of potentially "lively" champions, from John Terry to Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Cristiano Ronaldo, Ancelotti has earned himself the reputation of a "lion tamer". Recently, Rome daily *La Repubblica* asked him if he liked that definition.

"It's nice people say that, but with real class players you don't have to tame them, they're the most serious and professional of them all," he replied. "Maintaining good relations with players, even guys who are not playing much, relates to my experience as a player. I understand their needs.

"As for the class players, they are always the easiest to coach. I'll give you two examples: Cristiano Ronaldo and Ibrahimovic. Zlatan is the exact opposite of his distorted [media] image. A class player is first and foremost a human being."

In truth, there is a case for arguing that in his recent international years, Ancelotti has nearly always adapted his team play to fit the needs and abilities of his best players. Even if, now and again, he has persuaded them to change position or role – take the cases of Andrea Pirlo at Milan or Angel Di Maria and Toni Kroos at Real Madrid.

If Ancelotti was a good coach before he left Italy, he is now clearly a much better one. So, after Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid, what next? The Italian national team?

Asked that question recently by *La Repubblica*, he said: "Antonio Conte [the present Italy coach] is very good. Mind you, given that Italy gets to the Final once every 12 years and wins once every 24 years, I'll put my name down for 2030. I mean I'll only be 71 then, that is OK, no?" **WS**

Making his mark... Ancelotti chats with Parma players Reynald Pedros (centre) and Lilian Thuram during the club's Serie A runners-up season in 1997

February 1974

Each month we look back at the talking points of the decades

WORLD SOCCER VINTAGE
41 YEARS AGO
FEBRUARY 1974

Four months before the start of the World Cup finals in West Germany, *World Soccer* ran a front cover featuring the up-and-coming Holland team of Ruud Krol, Johnny Rep, Rob Rensenbrink and, of course, the two Johans, Cruyff and Neeskens.

We had suggested that the World Cup draw had been unkind to Rinus Michels' team, pairing them in the same group as Uruguay and the dangerous Sweden and Bulgaria. However, with a newly elected European Footballer of the Year in Cruyff, Dutch hopes were high for the summer ahead – and the team wouldn't disappoint.

One side who would not be at the tournament were England and *World Soccer*'s Brian Glanville was unrepentant in his views on the failure of England manager Alf Ramsey and his reluctance to resign, some three months after his team crashed out in the qualifiers after a home draw with Poland.

"Sir Alf, alas, is still with us, and showing at the moment, no sign of disappearing. If he won't go of his own will, surely he must be removed," wrote Glanville.

"One has said that Ramsey appears to conceive resignation as a confession of failure, when none is required. He HAS failed; the very results show it. He failed in the [European] Nations Cup, when his ineptly selected team foundered in the quarter-final at home to West Germany; and he then took to Berlin a team of cloggers with no chance at all of getting more than a bruising draw.

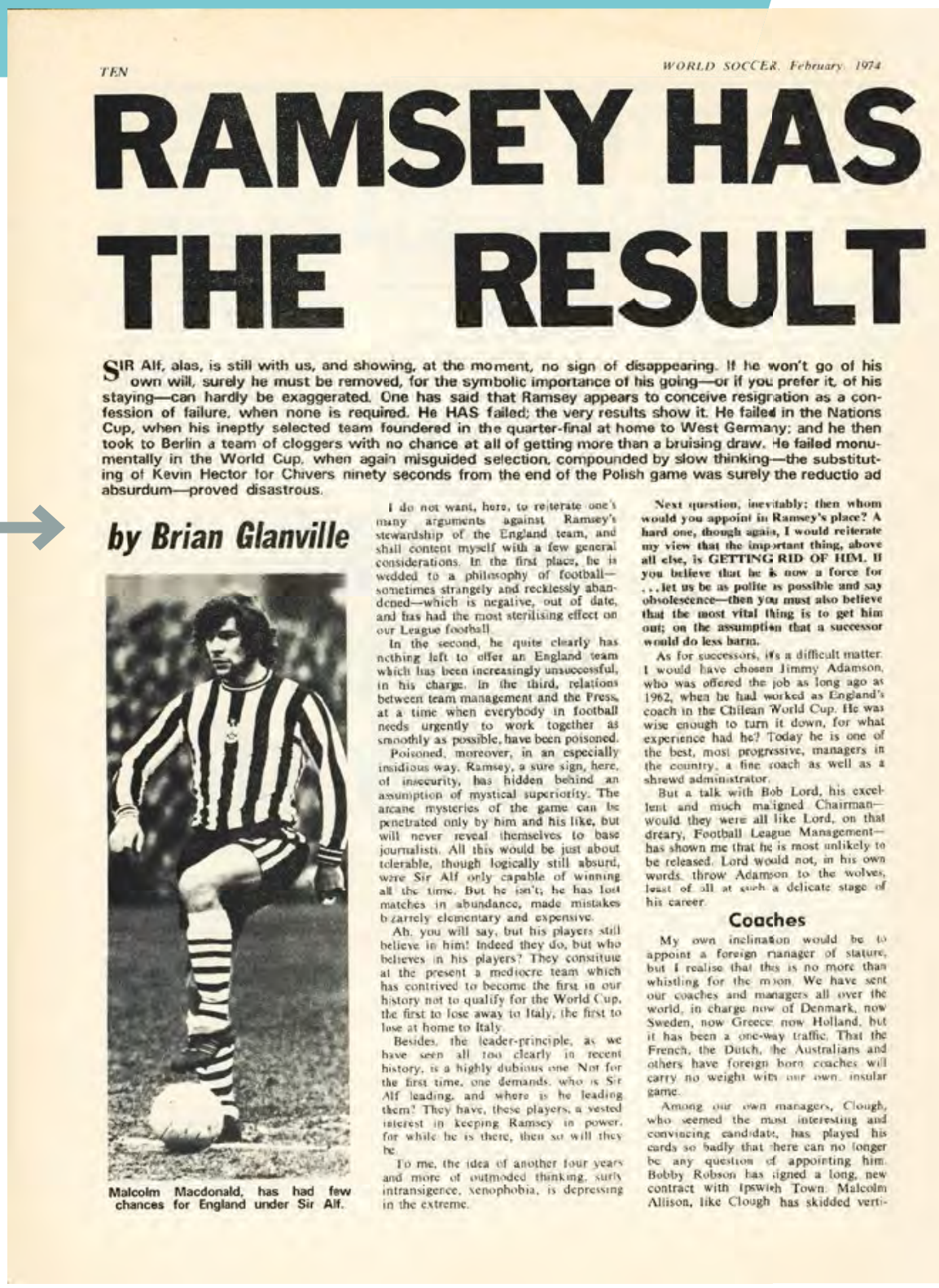
"He failed monumentally in the World Cup, when again misguided selection, compounded by slow thinking – the substituting of Kevin Hector for [Martin] Chivers 90 seconds from the end of the Polish game...proved disastrous."

And just as one of Ramsey's disciples from the victorious 1966 World Cup winning team, Martin Peters, was labelled "ahead of his time" by Ron Greenwood, his club manager at West Ham United, the same could possibly be said of Glanville's suggestion for an eventual successor to Ramsey – even though he despaired of it ever coming to fruition.

"My own inclination would be to appoint a foreign manager of stature," he suggested, "but I realise that this is no more than whistling for the moon.

"We have sent our coaches and managers all over the world, but it has been one-way traffic.

"That the French, the Dutch, the Australians and others have foreign-born coaches will carry no weight with our own, insular game." WS



TEN WORLD SOCCER, February, 1974

RAMSEY HAS THE RESULT

SIR Alf, alas, is still with us, and showing, at the moment, no sign of disappearing. If he won't go of his own will, surely he must be removed, for the symbolic importance of his going—or if you prefer it, of his staying—can hardly be exaggerated. One has said that Ramsey appears to conceive resignation as a confession of failure, when none is required. He HAS failed; the very results show it. He failed in the Nations Cup, when his ineptly selected team foundered in the quarter-final at home to West Germany; and he then took to Berlin a team of cloggers with no chance at all of getting more than a bruising draw. He failed monumentally in the World Cup, when again misguided selection, compounded by slow thinking—the substituting of Kevin Hector for Chivers ninety seconds from the end of the Polish game was surely the reductio ad absurdum—proved disastrous.

by Brian Glanville

Malcolm Macdonald, has had few chances for England under Sir Alf.

I do not want, here, to reiterate one's many arguments against Ramsey's stewardship of the England team, and shall content myself with a few general considerations. In the first place, he is wedded to a philosophy of football—sometimes strangely and recklessly abandoned—which is negative, out of date, and has had the most sterilising effect on our League football.

In the second, he quite clearly has nothing left to offer an England team which has been increasingly unsuccessful, in his charge. In the third, relations between team management and the Press, at a time when everybody in football needs urgently to work together as smoothly as possible, have been poisoned.

Poisoned, moreover, in an especially insidious way. Ramsey, a sure sign, here, of insecurity, has hidden behind an assumption of mystical superiority. The arcane mysteries of the game can be penetrated only by him and his like, but will never reveal themselves to base journalists. All this would be just about tolerable, though logically still absurd, were Sir Alf only capable of winning all the time. But he isn't; he has lost matches in abundance, made mistakes bizarrely elementary and expensive.

Ah, you will say, but his players still believe in him! Indeed they do, but who believes in his players? They constitute at the present a mediocre team which has contrived to become the first in our history not to qualify for the World Cup, the first to lose away to Italy, the first to lose at home to Italy.

Besides, the leader-principle, as we have seen all too clearly in recent history, is a highly dubious one. Not for the first time, one demands, who is Sir Alf leading, and where is he leading them? They have, these players, a vested interest in keeping Ramsey in power, for while he is there, then so will they be.

To me, the idea of another four years and more of outmoded thinking, surly intransigence, xenophobia, is depressing in the extreme.

Next question, inevitably: then whom would you appoint in Ramsey's place? A hard one, though again, I would reiterate my view that the important thing, above all else, is GETTING RID OF HIM. If you believe that he is now a force for ...let us be as polite as possible and say obsolescence—then you must also believe that the most vital thing is to get him out; on the assumption that a successor would do less harm.

As for successors, it's a difficult matter. I would have chosen Jimmy Adamson, who was offered the job as long ago as 1962, when he had worked as England's coach in the Chilean World Cup. He was wise enough to turn it down, for what experience had he? Today he is one of the best, most progressive, managers in the country, a fine coach as well as a shrewd administrator.

But a talk with Bob Lord, his excellent and much maligned Chairman—would they were all like Lord, on that dreary, Football League Management—has shown me that he is most unlikely to be released. Lord would not, in his own words, throw Adamson to the wolves, least of all at such a delicate stage of his career.

Coaches

My own inclination would be to appoint a foreign manager of stature, but I realise that this is no more than whistling for the moon. We have sent our coaches and managers all over the world, in charge now of Denmark, now Sweden, now Greece, now Holland, but it has been a one-way traffic. That the French, the Dutch, the Australians and others have foreign born coaches will carry no weight with our own, insular game.

Among our own managers, Clough, who seemed the most interesting and convincing candidate, has played his cards so badly that there can no longer be any question of appointing him. Bobby Robson has signed a long, new contract with Ipswich Town. Malcolm Allison, like Clough has skidded verti-

> "Ramsey, alas, is still with us and showing, at the moment, no sign of disappearing. If he won't go of his own will, surely he must be removed"
>
> Brian Glanville's verdict on the England manager

Total football...the captivating Holland team were the big feature in our February 1974 issue

Withering...Brian Glanville is unequivocal in his view

WORLD SOCCER, February, 1974 ELEVEN

FAILED... S SHOW IT!

ginously from his previous heights. Don Revie would clearly prefer to remain with Leeds; or perhaps take a more remunerative post elsewhere, finally discouraged by the lack of response in that curiously lukewarm city. Besides, he is a little old to think of switching from club management now.

Perhaps Bob Stokoe might be tempted away from Sunderland, where he has proved himself impressively, but where things have not been so rosy since that marvellous Cup Final victory, to wed him to Roker Park for life. At all events this, as I have suggested, is essentially a secondary question. We need new life, new leadership, new directions, in British football. The persistence of Ramsey in the managerial chair is the symbol of stasis.

Deference

I was interested to read the recent discussion, in WORLD SOCCER, of the relative parts played by the Football Association and the Football League in the early years of the European Cup. With deference to a colleague, I must fully support Sir Stanley Rous, who was quite understandably perturbed at the suggestion that the Association, rather than the League, had stood in the way of the competition in its formative stages.

Let me recapitulate what happened. When the European Cup was launched, in 1955, the retrograde Football League, Alan Hardaker in the Chair, "advised" Chelsea, the English Champions, not to participate. Chelsea meekly and gutlessly complied. The following season, the much more resilient and internationally minded Manchester United were the Champions. Again the League gave their half-baked, misguided, insular advice, but were politely told to take a walk. United went all the way through to the semi-final.

But the League had a long, malign memory. In 1958, with a most generous and sporting gesture, the organisers of the European Cup invited Manchester United to participate, though they had been knocked out in the semi-finals. The reason, of course, was to show sympathy to United for the dreadful disaster of the Munich air crash, which occurred on the way back from a European Cup tie in Belgrade.

But the Football League had no time for mawkish sentiment. In they came with all the force and fervour of their great, hobnailed boots and told United they could not compete, using the shamelessly impertinent excuse that EUROPEAN CUP RULES DID NOT PERMIT IT! In their words, UEFA having waived the qualification rules of the European Cup to admit Manchester United to the tournament, the Football League piously pronounced that they could not do so!

Busby and United were rightly furious, and appealed to the FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (be it noted). The F.A. gave United right, and said they could enter. The League then flew into a paddy and demanded a joint F.A.-F.L. Committee which cravenly and unforgivably reversed the F.A. decision and banned United from competing. It was a piece of petty spite by the Football League and I would not bother to recall it, were the Football Association not so unfairly tarred with the same brush.

I am quite, quite sure that there was no doubt at all in anybody's mind at the time where the Football Association stood; and with Rous as its internationally minded secretary, it would have been surprising had it stood anywhere else.

England team manager Sir Alf Ramsey checks the time, which does at least prove he has a watch.

Also in this issue...

Keir Radnedge reports on the shock news in Spain... Deadline: January 14

MUNOZ RESIGNS — WHO WILL TAKE OVER AT MADRID?

p16 Another manager in the news was Real Madrid coach Miguel Munoz who had just resigned after 14 years in charge at the Bernabeu, winning 14 trophies.

The end of his tenure did not surprise Keir Radnedge, who wrote: "I would like to say that Munoz's departure is a shock, but it is not.

"Real have not only failed results wise this season. They have been playing badly. Sunday's defeat away to Castellon was too much for the fans to stomach and, obviously, too much even for Munoz."

Radnedge then went on to nominate seven people to succeed Munoz, indicating that Ferenc Puskas – "need I say more?" – and Alfredo Di Stefano – "must be the favourite", were the outstanding candidates.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR

Cruyff wins for second time

p28 We also reported on the aforementioned Johan Cruyff winning the European Footballer of the Year award for 1973, two years after he first won it. In so doing he became only the second player, after Di Stefano in 1957 and 1959, to be voted Europe's best player on two occasions.

ARTHUR ROTMIL provides insight into the rank outsiders

HAITI CAN JUSTIFY FAITH OF 'BABY DOC'

An essential part of your football kit... World Soccer

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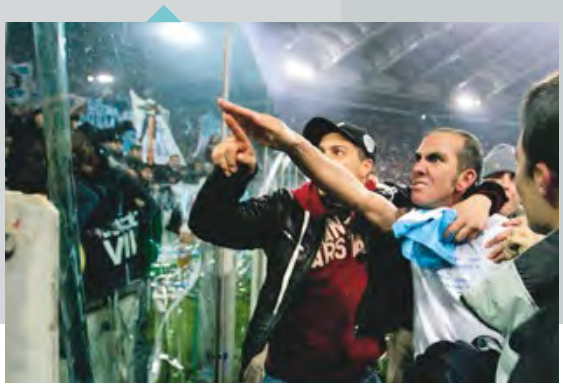
p20 Haiti, the rank outsiders for the World Cup, were given a two-page feature with *World Soccer* singing the praises of their star player, 26-year-old forward Emmanuel Sannon, who was known in Port-au-Prince as "the Pele of Haiti".

Bonev wins top award

p43 And keeping with a World Cup theme, Bulgaria forward Christo Bonev, who had scored seven important goals in his country's qualifying campaign, had been voted Bulgarian Footballer of the Year and was pictured reading an issue of our esteemed magazine.

10 YEARS AGO

Lazio's Paolo Di Canio courted controversy by celebrating victory over city rivals Roma with the infamous straight-arm "Roman Salute" of Mussolini's Fascist regime. Di Canio did it "in the heat of the moment" but others thought otherwise.

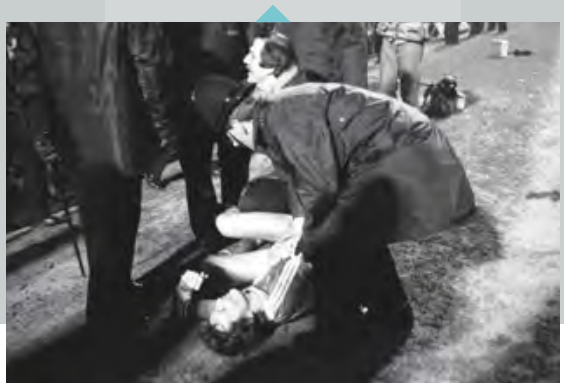


20 YEARS AGO

Previewing the quarter-finals of the Champions League, we made Louis Van Gaal's young Ajax team the favourites to lift the trophy. They would go on to reach the Final, beating holders Milan 1-0 thanks to a goal from a young Patrick Kluivert.

30 YEARS AGO

The first five editorial pages looked at the aftermath of a very controversial Celtic v Rapid Vienna Cup-winners Cup tie. The Austrians claimed a player was hit by a missile from a Celtic fan; the Scots denied any wrongdoing.



40 YEARS AGO

Reigning double European Cup holders Bayern Munich were thrown into strife after coach Udo Lattek quit. We suggested Bayern had hit a slump which had turned "the pride of Germany into the most erratic team in the Bundesliga".

50 YEARS AGO

Stanley Matthews, still in the English top division with Stoke City, turned 50 on February 1, 1965 and was knighted. He played one match that season, a 3-1 win over Fulham five days after his birthday, before hanging up his boots for good.

eyewitness

Steve Menary in Baku

AZERBAIJAN

Oil fuels bid for respectability

Azeri football has been given a shot in the arm by plans to host major events, including Euro 2020

In the last seconds of Qarabag's Europa League group game against Internazionale in December, the Azeri champions' Brazilian midfielder Richard Almeida puts the ball in the net. The crowd at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium in Baku leap out of their seats – and football in Azerbaijan seems about to change forever.

The deadlock is seemingly broken. Then, in the bitterest of ironies, in a stadium named after the linesman whose questionable decision helped England win the 1966 World Cup, a flag is raised and the goal disallowed. Qarabag needed to win to become the first Azeri team to reach the knockout stage of a UEFA competition. But when the referee immediately blows for full-time, it's 0-0 and Qarabag are out.

For all the disappointment of that result, football in Azerbaijan has changed irrevocably since Bahramov's death in 1993, less than two years after the nation gained its independence from Russia.

Despite the Caspian state signing a contract with oil giant BP in 1994 known as the "Contract of the Century", football initially struggled to make an impact in a country where boxing, chess and weightlifting are national obsessions. Local organisation of the game was particularly inept. The national championship was suspended between May 2002 and May 2003, and for the next two seasons Azerbaijan did not even enter a team in the Champions League.

If that was Azeri football's nadir, the game with Inter – despite the outcome – was its renaissance. Forced out of their home town of Agdam two decades earlier by the war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, Qarabag are everyone's favourite second team and the second Azeri club in three seasons to play in the Europa League group stage. But unlike Neftchi in 2012, they were in contention for qualification right up until the last kick.

> "I'm very proud and happy for our country. It's a big deal to get the right to host such a big tournament"
>
> **Former Azerbaijan international striker Nazim Suleymanov on hosting games at Euro 2022**

"It is the apex of excitement and of all the possibilities for our country," said Qarabag's vice-president, Tahir Gozel, the day before the sell-out match against the Serie A giants.

The urbane Gozel is one of an increasing number of younger Azeris to be educated in western Europe; in his case, Sheffield in England. Elkhan Mammadov, secretary of the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA), is another.

Under the 35-year-old Mammadov, football has taken a leading role in his country's quest to promote a new image through hosting major events.

From the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest to the inaugural European Games this June,

Under pressure... Internazionale (white) clear the danger from Qarabag during the Europa League qualifier in Baku

So close... Qarabag skipper Rashad Sadygov is disconsolate after his side just miss out on the knockout stage

Build-up...Inter and Qarabag line up in the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium

and Formula One's European Grand Prix scheduled for next year, Azerbaijan is an eager host. In football, the turning point was hosting the Women's Under-17 World Cup in 2012. Since then, the country has won the rights to host the men's European Under-17 tournament in 2016 and matches at Euro 2020.

Concerns over repression still linger and Mammadov puts this down to the hundreds of thousands of refugees displaced by the Nagorno-Karabakh War, which lasted from 1988 until 1994. Corruption is also an issue, with what Transparency International calls the "resource curse" of the oil-rich.

The owner of Baku FC, Hafiz Mammadov (no relation) is behind the "Land of Fire" sponsorship deal with Atletico Madrid. Like most prominent Azeri businessmen, he is fiercely patriotic – which helps him stay on the right side of an autocratic government. Last year, Amnesty International criticised the country's "abysmal" record on human rights.

On a more prosaic level, the need for costly visas must be addressed before Azerbaijan hosts Euro group games and a quarter-final match in Euro 2020. A visa costs UK residents US$118 and other Europeans pay €35.

However, hosting these tournaments helps justify heavy investment on stadia,

with smaller club grounds built for the youth tournaments, and a 68,000-capacity Olympic Stadium will host Euro 2020 games and the national team.

"Infrastructure, grass-roots football and education are our priorities," says Elkhan Mammadov. "In 2010, three teams in the Premier League shared one pitch in Baku. Now, all clubs have their own ground."

UEFA's radical changes to the Euros in 2020 mean the host nations are not guaranteed to take part. Missing their own party would be, says a briefly deflated Mammadov, "sad". In an attempt to ensure Azerbaijan's participation, the AFFA recruited former Real Madrid and Croatia star Robert Prosinecki as national coach on a three-year contract in December as a replacement for Berti Vogts.

Azerbaijan finished fourth in their 2014 World Cup qualifying group after gaining nine points and they were expected to be in contention for third spot in the Euro 2016 qualifiers. However, the first four games were lost, culminating with a 6-0 thrashing by Croatia, after which Vogts quit.

Prosinecki will be expected to bring in younger players, but the country's junior teams are no more successful than the senior side. He will not be helped by the fact that half the players in the Azerbaijan Premier League are foreign, with the AFFA showing little enthusiasm for nationalising these imports.

However, there have been changes. In 2008 there were no restrictions on overseas players, but the AFFA now insists that all Premier League clubs have youth teams from under-nine to under-19 level and at least five Azeris must start every first-team fixture.

In March 2014 the AFFA introduced a novel system where sporting directors are recruited from overseas – Germany, Holland and England so far – to work with young players at six Premier League sides and second-tier Ravan, who were surprisingly relegated last season. If the clubs accept having a sporting director employed directly by the national association they get a direct grant of €250,000 a season. "There's a lot of politics," sighs Daryl Willard, sporting director of top-flight side AZAL.

The Premier League has been slimmed down in recent years from 14 to 10 clubs, who play each other four times. One club is relegated to the First Division, where 16 teams play each other twice. But while high-profile European matches like Qarabag's game with Inter are well attended, there is little appetite for domestic fixtures.

> "Azerbaijan locks people up simply because they disagree with the government, including a campaigner who has called for a boycott – on human rights grounds – of the first European [Olympic] Games, to be held in Baku this summer"
>
> **Amnesty International**

Neftchi are Azerbaijan's oldest and most popular club, but their league games do not test their 11,000 capacity home, the Bakcell Arena. Neftchi's vice-president, Elnur Mammadov, blames televised football, saying: "People will take the best product, particularly if it's free."

Neftchi's Cameroonian striker Ernest Nfor also cites poor organisation. "We can see that a lot of things can be improved,

Work in progress... the Olympic Stadium, which will host Euro 2020 games

AZERBAIJAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2014-15

Home..Neftchi's Bakcell Arena

1 AZAL
2 Baku FC
3 Gabala
4 Inter Baku
5 Khazar Lankaran
6 Neftchi
7 Qarabag
8 Simurq
9 Sumqayit
10 *Araz Naxcivan
(* folded in November)

Sitting pretty...stadium workers take a break

like the organisation," he says. "Sometimes they cancel a game just hours before, or suddenly change the place of a game or the date."

This chaotic approach is best illustrated by the fate of Araz Naxcivan. The club folded in 2001, were revived in 2013 and immediately won promotion to the Premier League, before quitting in November last year. Reasons given vary from concerns about refereeing to the management being unwilling to tolerate poor results.

The Premier League now has just nine teams, and if Araz are replaced by Ravan, which seems likely, that would mean next season there will be five Premier League clubs based in Baku, providing even more competition for the few fans interested in club football.

Elkhan Mammadov says the response from the public for local matches is poor, admitting: "Matchday revenue is not high here. It's sold out in the regions but not in Baku. Ticket sales do not go well and the major income is from the sponsors."

By the sponsors, Mammadov means the

1 AZAL

One of four clubs in the capital, they used to be known as Olimpik Baku. Now owned by Azerbaijan Airlines, they are renowned as the most Soviet-style club in the Azeri top flight.

2 Baku FC

Controlled by oil and gas group Baglam, in 2008 they became the first Azeri team to reach the Champions League third qualifying round. Have struggled on and off the pitch ever since.

3 Gabala

Owned by milk and juice producers Gilan, the club was formed in 1995 in Goy Gol and moved to Gabala a decade later. Tony Adams joined the club as coach in May 2010 but the former England and Arsenal defender left 18 months later. Club chairman Tale Heydarov is the son of influential government minister Kamaladdin Heydarov.

4 Inter Baku

Formed in 2004, the club's origins lie in Khazar University although they are now controlled by the International Bank of Azerbaijan. One of the country's most well-financed sides, they have competed in European competition in every season since 2007.

5 Khazar Lankaran

The city of Lankaran is a hotbed of club football and the team, which is owned by Turkish-based shipping conglomerate Palmali, is well supported by Azeri standards.

6 Neftchi

Controlled by state oil company SOCAR, they are Azerbaijan's oldest club and their third-place finish in the old Soviet Top League in 1966 was the high point of Azeri football prior to independence. They lease the Bakcell Arena, built by the AFFA for the 2012 Women's Under-17 World Cup.

7 Qarabag

After two decades spent in exile due to Azerbaijan's war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, the club finally settled in the capital, Baku. National champions last season, they are one of only two sides – along with Neftchi – to play in the Azeri Premier League every season since its formation in 1992. Club owners Azersun are building a new stadium near Baku airport.

Training day...Inter Baku

8 Simurq

Formed in 2005, they are controlled by insurance group IAS and based in Zaqatala, which – at a drive of at least six hours from Baku – makes the club the furthest in the top flight from the capital.

9 Sumqayit

Formed in 2010 by the AFFA and only field Azeri players. Now controlled by a consortium of Azeri companies led by Kapital Bank, they are one of the few clubs who try to develop and sell on their own players, typically raising around €150,000 a season through transfers.

industrial groups that own Azerbaijan's leading clubs, such as the International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA), which has sunk €20 million into Inter Baku's new stadium.

Inter might get 4,000 fans for a game with Neftchi but otherwise 1,500 is a good crowd. Tickets are only between one or two Manat (€1-2), but some games can attract no more than a few hundred people.

Sitting in the boardroom of Inter's stadium complex, which will soon be expanded further to meet UEFA licensing requirements, the club's Bulgarian president Georgi Nikolov shrugs and smiles uncomfortably when asked about spectators.

Money from sponsors IBA, the AFFA grant and playing in Europe provide 90 per cent of Inter's budget. The club itself generates just 10 per cent. "This is the model of developing Azerbaijani football but it's not easy to sustain. We give free entry but it doesn't work. This is why we say it's better to sell tickets," says Nikolov.

In 2014, the AFFA produced a benchmark report and Elkhan Mammadov is happy to provide a copy. Financial details are, perhaps unsurprisingly, in short supply, but he says that three Azeri clubs – Inter, Neftchi and Qarabag – now all turn over more than €5 million a year and will fall under the auspices of UEFA's Financial Fairplay regime.

He is also keen to point out that, according to AFFA's own research, the average wage bill at Azeri Premier League clubs comprises just 12 per cent of turnover. This is not, says Elkhan Mammadov, a sign of prudent spending but a total lack of transparency.

A decade ago the government initiated tax breaks so clubs could write off capital investments on stadia against tax to help produce the stadia and enable Azerbaijan to win the rights to host the Women's Under-17 World Cup. As wages boomed, overseas players began flocking to Azerbaijan. In 2004, players earned around €250 a month; today it is said that the average full-time professional in the Azeri Premier League earns €100,000 a year. Yet the top earners, mostly overseas stars at big clubs in Baku, are understood to take home in excess of €500,000 a year. However, no one is sure of the exact figures because many players are employed directly by the industrial conglomerates rather than their subsidiary clubs, hence the low wages-to-turnover ratio.

Quite what UEFA will make of that no one knows, but the model is not sustainable. As Inter Baku's Nikolov freely admits, he does not expect Azeri football to break even before at least 2020 – a date that could be the real watershed year in the country's football history. **WS**

> "We give free entry but it doesn't work. This is why we say it's better to sell tickets"
>
> **Inter Baku president Georgi Nikolov on the club's struggle to attract spectators**

FOOTBALL IN AZERBAIJAN

The key figures

ROVNAG ABDULLAYEV
AFFA president since 2008, chief executive of state oil company SOCAR and member of the national assembly, he was also Neftchi president from 2004 to 2008 and key to major changes in the running of the game and bidding for major events.

ELKHAN MAMMADOV
Involved in Azerbaijan's bids for the 2016 and 2020 Olympic Games before joining AFFA as secretary in 2007. Central figure in Azerbaijan winning the rights to host the 2012 Women's Under-17 World Cup and the men's 2016 European Under-17 Championship. An increasingly influential figure in UEFA politics.

ROBERT PROSINECKI
Signed a three-year contract as national coach in December and expected to have Azerbaijan challenging for Euro 2020 qualification. Currently holed up in the Absheron Marriot hotel in Baku but, unlike predecessor Berti Vogts, plans to move his family to the country.

REYNALDO
The Brazilian striker failed to make an impact in five years in Belgium and left for Azerbaijan in 2013, joining Qarabag. Scored the winner against Salzburg of Austria in the home leg of the Champions League qualifiers but sidelined by injury for the vital Europa League group game with Internazionale.

HAFIZ MAMMADOV
Owner of Baku FC and French club Lens, he secured shirt sponsorship of 2014 Champions League finalists Atletico Madrid. Failed in a takeover bid for Sheffield Wednesday but arranged a sponsorship deal and, like Atletico, the club's shirts bear the slogan "Azerbaijan – Land of Fire".

Determined... Azerbaijan's Elvin Yunuszade (right) thwarts Norway in a Euro 2016 qualifier in Baku

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Facetoface

JOACHIM LOW

"We are on top of the world, but the trick is to stay there, to become even better"

Germany's World Cup-winning coach reflects on his side's victory in Brazil last summer

You had an extensive three-day meeting with your staff early last year. What did it yield?
At that point in time the World Cup was taking shape. We could make plans for group-stage opponents and our training HQ in Brazil, and look at the different routes we could take during the tournament. We intensively asked ourselves many questions. What was the strategy with our own team? How did we foresee the pre-competition preparations? Which players were in the frame to meet our requirements?

Which factors were crucial in that last area of player requirement?
Naturally, the decisive criteria were ones of performance potential. But, as shown by my experience of previous tournaments, there are other things to consider. It's important to put the right characters together.

> "After the world title there are other goals. This is a job which is judged on titles"

What were you looking for from the players personality-wise?
Players who are team-orientated, who integrate well and are communicative. Those who want to take on responsibility, are disciplined and ambitious. For every game, I wanted everyone on the bench to be ready for action. I also wanted to take young players who could put pressure on the more senior guys and would handle themselves positively in the group. For example, Erik Durm and Matthias Ginter.

How long was your initial list of players?
In January, we'd whittled it down to 30 outfield players. But Christoph Kramer, for one, was not on the list. We only began to focus on him in the second-half of the season.

Despite Sami Khedira's cruciate ligament injury in the autumn of 2013 you were quick to announce that you would leave the door open to him "right until the last moment". Why?
He's such a valuable player to us that I was prepared to give him every chance. I knew that Sami was remarkably focused on recovering in time and was really putting himself through it to make the World Cup. With his strong mentality and will-to-win, he's important to the team in many ways.

After the USA game in the group stage, Khedira – who was on the bench at this point – publicly demanded a quicker style of play. Should he have done so?
Sami and I had spoken about this during the build-up to the tournament. I knew his opinion, he knew mine. As far as I was concerned, there wasn't a problem.

Khedira and Bastian Schweinsteiger, both of whom were recovering from injury, would not have been particularly happy to be left out of the starting line-up early in the tournament...
I knew the difficult conditions [in Brazil] better than the players. Neither player was in a position early on in the tournament of giving seven high-level performances. There had to be some division of tasks in this situation.

Did they both accept your decision?
During our World Cup preparations in Austria, I made clear to both of them that Philipp Lahm could also be a key man in midfield thanks to his passing and organisational skills. I find it completely normal that players of the status of Khedira and Schweinsteiger sometimes have another opinion. Naturally they felt they were ready to go. But, in the end, a coach has to make the decision.

The pre-World Cup camp in Austria was full of injury concerns – including an accident during a commercial event. Did you have any doubts at this point?
No. From the very start of the training camp the mentality of the players was just right. They wanted to work hard, to take the next step. Our strategy and ideas on the game had become automatic and we'd learnt from previous disappointments.

Then came Marco Reus' serious injury and withdrawal from the tournament. How does a coach deal with that?
That was very sad for all of us, but especially for Marco. I'm convinced he would have enjoyed a great World Cup. But I couldn't dwell on it. My first duty was to find a solution. With Thomas Muller, Mario Gotze and Andre Schurrle, I thought we had enough attacking alternatives. So I brought in Shkodran Mustafi as another defensive option. I'm no stranger to such problems on the eve of a tournament. In 2010 Michael Ballack pulled out shortly before the World Cup in South Africa.

World Cup 2014 was your fourth finals as *Bundestrainer*. Has your leadership style changed in that time?
Obviously you build up experience and come across situations which you've already been through. This was very important at certain times in Brazil. I wouldn't say, though, that the players had more or less freedom in 2014 than at previous tournaments. I've always worked on a case-by-case basis, deciding whether to keep the guys in full concentration or letting them off the leash a little. Striking the balance between tension and relaxation is vital in a tournament and with Campo Bahia [Germany's purpose-built training HQ] we had the perfect base.

Was the 2-1 win over Algeria in the knockout stage the crossroads in the journey to the world title?
We were facing defiant and awkward opponents, and at times we were below par. But we battled through to win narrowly. In the past, such as in our loss to Italy in the semi-finals of Euro 2012, we weren't able to do so. In this sense, the Algeria game was significant for us.

Why then did you make so many ▸

World beater...Germany substitute Gotze watches his shot in extra time beat Argentina keeper Sergio Romero in the World Cup Final

changes for your next game, the quarter-final against France?
One: we needed new stimuli. Two: France were an incredibly cohesive and compact team. Only on the flanks would we have some room. That's why we moved Lahm to right-back. He would help us going forward, while the centre-back pairing of Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels gave us security.

How do you judge the all-round development of Boateng's game?
In the last couple of years Jerome has made huge strides. He's been playing with unbelievable consistency and his distribution is outstanding, playing penetrative passes to left or right. Along with Hummels, he was great in the Final.

Why did you begin the World Cup with a back-line of four central defenders?
This idea had several sources: injuries, climate, kick-off times, tournament situation. You have to be flexible. With this set-up, we were very stable at the back, and with five or six very strong attackers in the team we were always capable of scoring a goal or two.

You were 5-0 up at half-time against Brazil in the semi-final. What did you say to the team?
It was clear that the game was won. Our opponents were on the floor, completely in shock. All I had to say was carry on in the same vein. Stay serious, keep concentrating and play with humility and simplicity.

Did you forbid the team from running up a double-figure scoreline?
No. I just told them to stick to our style of play and tactical plan.

What was the atmosphere like in the dressing room at the time?
There was no boiling over of euphoria. More important to me was the mood in the camp after the game.

Why?
At the 2010 World Cup we were on an incredible high after beating England 4-1 and Argentina 4-0, and maybe that state of mind went on for too long prior to the semi-final [which Germany lost to Spain]. In Belo Horizonte, it was completely different. In the dressing room and that evening, all the players were making it clear that the journey wasn't over. It made me feel that we were ripe to go all the way.

Schurrle's cross followed by Gotze's volleyed winner. Your substitutions in the Final certainly made the difference...
Before the Final, I was weighing up whether to start with Klose or Gotze up front. Miro [Klose] is someone the Argentinians have an awful lot of respect for. But in the end I thought that an unpredictable player like Gotze would be more effective coming on later. That was my decision. Use Klose until he begins to tire, then go with Gotze, who in decisive moments can make or score goals.

High point...Low celebrates with his team in Rio de Janeiro's Estadio Maracana after beating Argentina

In retrospect was it correct to always stay loyal to Mesut Ozil?
Since 2010, Mesut has been an integral part of the team. He can change a game with a pass or a brilliant idea and has unbelievable potential. You seldom find players of such ability. I know he's still very ambitious and is keen to get back to top form in 2015. The World Cup in Brazil wasn't simple for him as he was coming off a very physically demanding season in the English league.

How do you view 2015 as far as the national team is concerned?
In certain areas we have to begin again. Opponents will have analysed the way we play and because of that we will have to come up with new methods. We are on top of the world, but the trick is to stay there, to become even better.

What sort of tactical changes could be in the pipeline?
A three-man defence could be a possibility. So could a return to twin strikers. They are the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which we have to fit together to make the big picture. We need to be more flexible, more adept at changing from one system to another during a game.

Your DFB contract runs out in 2016. What is left for a World Cup-winning coach?
I haven't given it any thought at all. But it's certainly possible that I could return to club management. Why not? When? I just don't know. I've got used to working on two-year tournament cycles.

Interview by Oliver Hartmann & Karl-Heinz Wild/ESM

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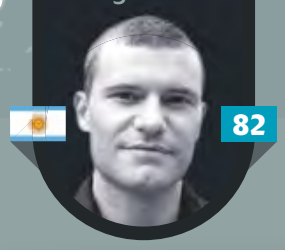

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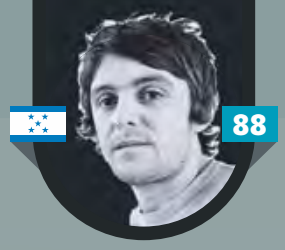

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PLUS

97 Squads...all the players from the Club World Cup

96 ESM XI...Harry Kane makes the line-up

83 South America round-up...Sante Fe (in red) win Colombia's clausura

Club World Cup

BRIAN HOMEWOOD

Real crowned best in the world

European champions are too good as the gulf in class is exposed once more

While Europeans seem to think the Club World Cup does not matter, try telling that to the 9,000 San Lorenzo supporters who made the long trip to Morocco for what they believed was the most important week in their club's history.

Real Madrid, three-times winners of the Intercontinental Cup, cantered to victory. They beat CONCACAF champions Cruz Azul 4-0 in the semi-finals and South American champions San Lorenzo 2-0 in the Final to claim this competition for the first time since it began in 2005.

Having already won with Milan in 2007, coach Carlo Ancelotti became a two-time club world champion. But while he looked fairly unexcited by the whole thing, for the likes of San Lorenzo and part-timers Auckland City, who astonishingly reached the last four, it was a tournament they won't forget in a hurry.

The host nation, however, will remember it for all the wrong reasons as the pitch in Rabat failed to cope with a downpour and the sports minister was fired after the Real Madrid-Cruz Azul semi-final had to be switched at the last minute to Marrakech.

The tournament's main problem is that it has become a reminder of the chasm that separates domestic football in Europe from the rest of the world.

The talent drain to the European game means that these days South Americans and Africans play against – rather than for – teams from their own continent, which are made up of workmanlike players who have not been good enough to make the move overseas.

The only member of the San Lorenzo squad who played at the 2014 World Cup was 38-year-old Colombia defender Mario Yepes, while African champions ES Setif from Algeria included only a few internationals, and they had just a sprinkling of appearances for their country between them.

San Lorenzo captain Juan Mercier's story was fairly typical. He spent the first half of his career in the lower divisions of Argentinian football and only reached the top flight when he was 27.

"I never thought I'd ever be in a situation like this, about to take on Real Madrid," said the midfielder, who is now 34 and has also plied his trade in Saudi Arabia. "At my age, it's like touching heaven."

San Lorenzo's fans were clearly determined to enjoy it as well, even if they did not quite match Atletico Mineiro's invasion of Marrakech the previous year. Despite being outnumbered by Real-supporting locals at the Final, they sang a varied repertoire of songs throughout the game and were still singing during the trophy presentation at the end.

> "It's a fitting end to an unforgettable year. I'm proud of what we've achieved and delighted with our performances"
>
> Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti

Battle...Auckland City (blue) and ES Setif

Opener...Ramos (left) gives Real Madrid the lead in the Final

The tournament hardly got off to the brightest start as Moghreb Tetouan, who qualified as champions of the host nation, and Oceania champions Auckland City drew 0-0 after extra-time in the preliminary round, before the New Zealanders won on penalties. Moghreb's coach Aziz el Amri subsequently resigned.

Auckland then shocked ES Setif 1-0 in the quarter-finals when John Irving scored following a corner early in the second half. Making a record sixth appearance in the competition, Auckland also made history by becoming the first team from Oceania to reach the last four.

Their game against ES Setif, which was the first half of a double bill at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat, was played in driving rain and by the time Western Sydney Wanderers and Cruz Azul came out for the second game, the pitch was already in a poor state.

The deluge continued and by the end the teams were splashing around on a waterlogged surface that Wanderers goalkeeper Ante Covic described as "disgusting".

The Asian champions, whose

World champions...Real Madrid's squad and backroom staff celebrate their triumph in Morocco

Damp squib... Cruz Azul (in blue) and Western Sydney Wanderers try to cope with atrocious conditions in Rabat

players had been involved in a pay dispute with the club on the eve of the tournament and had threatened a boycott, led through a Iacopo La Rocca goal until the last minute, when Gerardo Torrado equalised with a penalty for the Mexicans. Extra-time goals by Hugo Pavone and Torrado, from another penalty, completed Cruz Azul's win.

The episode was hugely embarrassing for local organisers who had insisted on using Rabat despite recommendations from FIFA that they stick with Agadir, the trouble-free secondary venue used last year. It was also the last thing Morocco needed after they had pulled out of hosting the 2015 African Nations Cup due to fears over the Ebola virus, despite insistence from CAF that the tournament would go ahead regardless.

After a month-long internal investigation, Morocco's minister of youth and sports, Mohammed Ouzzine, was held responsible for Rabat being unsuitable and he was sacked by King Mohammed VI.

Desperate to save their blushes, organisers moved the semi-final between Real Madrid and Cruz Azul to Marrakech, where Ancelotti's men enjoyed vociferous backing from local fans in a comfortable 4-0 win.

The other semi saw Auckland, whose side included a zoology student, a lawyer, a delivery-truck driver, grass-roots football coaches and a retail assistant, took San Lorenzo to extra-time, holding them 1-1 after 90 minutes, before sub Mauro Matos ended their run four minutes after the re-start.

"We are the moral winners by a mile, pushing the South American champions, not losing in 90 minutes and even having the chance to win it," said coach Ramon Tribulietx.

San Lorenzo's plan for the Final was clearly to cling on for as long as possible and stage a smash-and-grab raid. They did well to restrict Real to a couple of scoring chances in the opening half hour but were undone when Sergio Ramos headed in eight minutes before half-time. Gareth Bale added a second six minutes after the break.

San Lorenzo coach Edgardo Bauza pointed out that there was hardly anything new about Real enjoying overwhelming superiority.

"The big difference is between us and the four or five best teams in the world, not all the European teams," he said. "If you take out the top four or five, such as Real, Barcelona and Bayern, we could play a match on equal terms against almost any European opposition." WS

Real landmarks

4 Victory saw Real collect their fourth trophy of 2014 – making it the most successful calendar year in the club's history.

700 Goalkeeper Iker Casillas made his 700th appearance for the club in the Final.

23 And the 33-year-old won his 23rd trophy for club and country.

4 Real Madrid's victory meant they equalled Milan's record of four inter-continental cups.

NEW SECTION

JANUARY 1-JANUARY 20, 2015

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

➤ Thursday January 1

ENGLAND: Harry Kane scores twice as Tottenham Hotspur stun league leaders Chelsea 5-3 at White Hart Lane. Southampton stay in fourth place after beating Arsenal 2-0. Frank Lampard celebrates the extension of his stay at Manchester City by scoring the winner in a 3-2 victory over Burnley. West Brom confirm Tony Pulis as their new manager.
FRANCE: Bordeaux announce Mali striker Cheick Diabate will be sidelined for four months, missing the African Nations Cup.

Friday January 2

GERMANY: Bayern Munich agree to sign Germany under-19 international Joshua Kimmich from Red Bull Leipzig in the summer.
SPAIN: Argentina midfielder Enzo Perez agrees to join Valencia from Portugal's Benfica for a reported €25million.

Nice recruit...midfielder Ben Arfa

Saturday January 3

ENGLAND: Former Newcastle United boss Alan Pardew is confirmed as the new manager of Crystal Palace.
FRANCE: Hatem Ben Arfa joins Nice after leaving Newcastle United.

Sunday January 4

ENGLAND: Third-tier Sheffield United provide the biggest shock of the FA Cup third round as they beat Premier League club Queens Park Rangers 3-0.
FRANCE: Fourth-tier Grenoble dump Marseille out of the French Cup round of 64 with a 5-4 win on penalties. The Ligue 1 leaders concede an equaliser in the last minute of extra time as they are pegged back to a 3-3 draw.
PORTUGAL: Vitoria Guimaraes maintain third place in the league with a 4-0 defeat of Nacional.
SPAIN: Liga leaders Real Madrid's run of 22 victories ends with a 2-1 loss to Valencia. But Barcelona miss the chance to go top as they are beaten 1-0 at home by Real Sociedad. A crowd of 45,000 Atletico Madrid fans welcome Fernando Torres back to the club.

Monday January 5

AUSTRALIA: With concerns being voiced over the potential danger of staging the 2022 World Cup in the summer heat of Qatar, players' union boss Adam Vivian questions the decision to go ahead with the A-League game between Perth Glory and Adelaide United despite temperatures being around 39 degrees at kick-off and 35 degrees when the match finishes. "Some players have since reported heat illnesses, including excessive weight loss, headaches and vomiting," claims Vivian. The decision to proceed is seen by some as putting the interests of television before player welfare, but Damien De Bohun, head of the A-League, argues: "We've gone to great lengths to take serious medical advice on heat in football, but it's important to note that the Football Federation Australia standards are in fact more stringent than FIFA standards and it's based on medical best practice in both Australia and the United States." Although kick-off is put back 30 minutes, Perth's Chris Harold suffers from heat exhaustion and has to be substituted within half an hour as his side lose 2-1.
ITALY: Lazio beat Sampdoria to rise

Shock...Chelsea skipper John Terry (left) cannot stop Kane scoring in Tottenham's 5-3 win over the Premier League leaders

Feeling the heat... Adelaide United (left) and Perth Glory

to third place in Serie A. Genoa sign midfielder Tino Costa on loan from Spartak Moscow.

SPAIN: Andoni Zubizaretta is sacked as Barcelona's sporting director, while Carles Puyol quits his role as Zubizaretta's assistant. Getafe appoint Quique Sanchez Flores as successor to coach Cosmin Contra.

Tuesday January 6

BOLIVIA: Interim coach Mauricio Soria signs a four-year permanent deal to lead the national side.

CAMEROON: West Ham United midfielder Alex Song announces his retirement from international football after being left out of the African Nations Cup squad.

CYPRUS: Level on points with Apollon at the top of the league, defending champions APOEL part company with coach Giorgos Donis the day after they are held 1-1 at home by bottom side Ayia Napa.

GREECE: Olympiakos sack their Spanish coach Michel with the side ➤

Olympiakos exit...coach Michel

Portugal

TIM KUNDERT

Impressive... Guimaraes go marching on

Guimaraes reap benefits of youth

The "Big Three" have a new challenger this term

While it is never a surprise to see Benfica, Sporting Lisbon and Porto battling it out for the top three places in Portugal, an unexpected fourth side has joined the party this season in Vitoria Guimaraes.

Although the team has some of the country's most fervent supporters, the club was in a state of financial meltdown when coach Rui Vitoria was first appointed, in 2011, with wages unpaid and any bankable assets in the squad quickly sold off.

The 44-year-old quickly realised that the only way forward was to put the emphasis on youth – and he oversaw a spectacular change in fortunes. As well as building an increasingly competitive side, in 2013 he led the club to its first major silverware, beating Benfica in the Portuguese Cup Final. And this despite the club selling its brightest youngsters in each transfer window.

The perilous financial state makes it impossible to keep hold of talent. Guimaraes' most-used player this season, Adama Traore, has been sold to Basle and midfielder Andre Andre is also set to leave. Should a reasonable bid come in for centre-back Joao Afonso, Ghanaian midfielder Bernard Mensah or Cape Verdean winger Hernani Fortes, they too will likely be on their way.

Vitoria recognises that the tough hand he has been dealt comes with the territory and says: "We have the cheapest team in the Primeira Liga; our budget is even lower than a lot of second division clubs.

"Everything we've achieved, we've done in the background of a crisis, working with unknown players. Nowhere in Portugal or in Europe is there a better quality/price ratio than at Vitoria Guimaraes."

With Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira repeatedly saying his club will soon be shifting to a team based around academy players, Vitoria is seen as a strong candidate to succeed Jorge Jesus.

Another poor showing in the Champions League has increased the pressure on Jesus, who is hoping to guide the club to their first back-to-back championships for three decades. However, the loss in the January transfer window of midfield heartbeat Enzo Perez to Valencia could prove a sale too far.

These are happier days for Porto, through to the last 16 of the Champions League and with high hopes of progressing against Basle. Coach Julen Lopetegui was fiercely criticised for his rotation policy early in the season – detractors accusing the Spaniard of "not understanding Portuguese football" – but Porto are now reaping the benefit of Jackson Martinez's goals and the intelligent, incisive football of 20-year-old Oliver Torres.

Porto and Benfica have won the last 12 Portuguese championships between them, but Sporting fans believe their club is on the cusp of breaking that duopoly. Their two main rivals are looking more to youth development – and this is the one area in which Sporting have consistently outperformed everyone else in Portugal.

They have, however, been their own worst enemy at times this campaign and a bizarre self-fabricated crisis over the Christmas break did little to help. President Bruno De Carvalho wanted to sack promising young coach Marco Silva, but had to backtrack when it became clear the overwhelming majority of Sporting fans were vehemently opposed to such a decision. WS

second in the Super League.
ITALY: Gianfranco Zola's coaching career in Serie A gets off to a terrible start as his Cagliari side are thrashed 5-0 at Palermo. Lukas Podolski makes his debut on loan for Internazionale as they draw 1-1 with Juventus in the *Derby d'Italia*.
KUWAIT: FIFA ExCo member Prince Ali announces he will challenge FIFA president Sepp Blatter.
ROMANIA: Second in the league and nine points behind Steaua, CFR Cluj appoint Eugen Trica as their third coach of the season.
SENEGAL: West Ham striker Diafra Sakho is ruled out of the African Nations Cup with a back injury.

Wednesday January 7

GREECE: Olympiakos beat Fostiras 2-0 in the Greek Cup to record a sixth successive win and appoint former Porto boss Vitor Pereira as their new coach.
SPAIN: On-loan striker Fernando Torres makes a winning return in an Atletico Madrid shirt as the hosts beat holders Real Madrid 2-0 in the first leg of their last-16 clash in the Spanish Cup. Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu calls an early election for the end of the season in response to increasing pressure on his position.
USA: Steven Gerrard confirms he will join Los Angeles Galaxy when his contract with Liverpool expires in July. New York Red Bulls announce the sacking of coach Mike Petke.

Thursday January 8

ENGLAND: Third-tier side Oldham Athletic decide against offering a contract to convicted rapist and former Wales striker Ched Evans following threats to the club's "staff and their families". Former Barcelona goalkeeper Victor Valdes joins Manchester United on an 18-month contract. Jose Mourinho is charged by the FA for claiming a referee conspiracy against Chelsea.
IVORY COAST: Manchester City and Ivory Coast midfielder Yaya Toure is named CAF African Player of the Year for a record successive fourth time. Borussia Dortmund's Gabon forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was runner-up, with Lille and Nigeria goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama in third.
ITALY: Fiorentina defender Stefan Savic is banned for four matches for elbowing Antonio Cassano of Parma.
SPAIN: Dropped for the league defeat at Real Sociedad on Sunday, Lionel Messi returns to the side and scores his 15th goal in his last 11 club games as Barcelona beat Elche ➤

Camp Nou crisis averted ...for now

Upheaval at Barcelona as president calls summer elections

Barcelona will go to the polls after the club's president, Josep Maria Bartomeu, called elections for the end of the season, a year ahead of schedule. According to Bartomeu, the decision had been taken to "lessen the tension" surrounding the club in the midst of a growing crisis. A date is yet to be set, but it is likely to be in June, and although he is yet to make an announcement, the former president Joan Laporta is already the favourite.

Bartomeu will stand too, but he is extremely unlikely to win. He announced the decision at the start of what would become an exhausting 75-minute press conference at Camp Nou in which he struggled to respond convincingly to an avalanche of questions.

At one point he insisted that the "fans are happy" and that the image of the club is "not so bad", but that was the point: they are not happy and the club's image has been severely damaged.

The announcement was made less than a year after Bartomeu had taken over from Sandro Rosell, who resigned in the wake of the scandal over the signing of Neymar, with the public prosecutor investigating the case and Barcelona forced to make an extra payment to the taxman. Rosell had been the most voted-for president in Barca's history but – apparently driven by a desire to impose his own identity upon the club and wipe out the legacy of his enemy Laporta – his credibility had crumbled.

For many supporters, Barcelona was losing its identity. Some were critical of Qatar becoming the main sponsors; others pointed to the board's broken relationship with Johan Cruyff. Pep Guardiola's departure still stung, too, as did the way in which media groups

Statement...Bartomeu makes his elections announcement

Left out...Messi was on the bench for Barcelona's game with Real Sociedad

> "The thought of having a team without Messi is not even something we contemplate"
> Barcelona coach Luis Enrique

close to the presidency tried to diminish his agency and legacy.

Bartomeu took over and sought to pacify the club, while building himself a base sufficiently powerful and popular to stand for election and win. But the situation has not improved. And for him, it has got worse.

The statutes allowed for him to carry on until the end of the term in 2016 but, having never been voted in, he lacked a popular mandate and failed to bridge the divides that had opened up. Nor did he escape the mistakes of the Rosell era, which became his as he had been Rosell's vice-president.

Last season Barca finished empty-handed for the first time since 2008. Lionel Messi publicly described one director, Javier Faus, as "a man who knows nothing about football". And FIFA banned Barcelona from signing anyone for the next two transfer windows – a decision the CAS upheld at the start of this year.

Barcelona lost to Real Sociedad on the opening weekend of 2015, with Messi left on the bench by the coach Luis Enrique.

Messi has been left out on the first weekend of the new year following the winter break before – in fact. he had been left out in five of the last six year-opening fixtures – but this was different. They were away at Sociedad, a tough opponent, and what followed was a costly defeat that came in the context of a Barcelona

side that was yet to build a real identity, a team that had not played well so far this season and a club that was institutionally unstable. It also came just days after the CAS had ratified the transfer ban.

Afterwards, the sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta noted that – as vice-president in charge of sporting affairs – the man ultimately responsible, as well as Zubizarreta himself, was Bartomeu.

The next day, Zubizarreta was sacked, along with his two assistants. Carles Puyol, who had only recently joined the technical secretariat, walked that same afternoon. And all of this was less than a month after the director general had been sacked too.

The conditions for a crisis were always there. The trigger was that defeat at Sociedad and the fact that Barcelona had begun the game without Messi. Reports began emerging that suggested the Argentinian's relationship with Enrique had broken down and that they had confronted each other. The coach refused to "confirm or deny" those reports in a press conference, but he did deny one thing: that he had been handed an ultimatum by the president. A few hours later, Bartomeu gave a press conference of his own. Backed into a corner, he announced elections.

When Bartomeu took over he said that he was going to carry on as president rather than call elections because Barcelona needed "stability". Now he used a similar argument for calling elections. It was time to "reduce tensions," he said. The swirl of politics and self-interest was unavoidable again.

If calling elections reduced tension, the players then did their bit too by defeating Atletico Madrid 3-1 in their best performance of the season. Afterwards Messi, who had played superbly, denied reports of him falling out with Enrique and insisted that he has no intention of leaving, describing links to Chelsea or Manchester City as "lies".

That fear still lingers though, and the peace that descended was an uneasy one. The crisis had been contained but not permanently resolved. Barcelona are on standby, decisions on hold. Now, they wait; in the summer there will be changes.

Bartomeu will probably go, so too Enrique. The question that obsesses them now is: will Messi leave as well?

These will be unusual elections as the usual bombastic promises will not work this time. The FIFA ban means that Barcelona cannot sign anyone until January 2016, so the focus will instead be on the sporting directors and the coaches chosen by the candidates – and their ability to keep Messi. Normally, presidential candidates promise that the world's best players will join; this time they will promise that the man they consider the world's best player will not depart. **WS**

5-0 in the Spanish Cup.

USA: Twenty four metropolitan areas express their interest in hosting games at next year's Centennial Copa America, which will be staged outside South America for the first time.

Friday January 9

ASIAN CUP: Hosts Australia come from a goal down to beat Kuwait 4-1 in the opening game of the finals. Tim Cahill, Massimo Luongo, Mile Jedinak and James Troisi are on target for the Socceroos in front of a 30,000 sell-out crowd in Melbourne.

ENGLAND: Championship side Cardiff City announce they will change their home kit back from red to their traditional blue.

FRANCE: League leaders Marseille lose for the second time in a week, going down 2-1 at Montpellier just days after crashing out of the French Cup to fourth-tier Grenoble.

GERMANY: Toni Kroos is voted the World Cup winners' player of the year, ahead of Miroslav Klose and Manuel Neuer.

ITALY: Internationale sign Xherdan Shaqiri on loan from German side Bayern Munich. The 23-year-old attacking midfielder will make the move permanent in the summer.

SENEGAL: Alain Giresse includes Southampton striker Sadio Mane in his African Nations Cup squad despite a calf injury

SCOTLAND: Former Bayern Munich coach Felix Magath reveals that he bought a one per cent stake in Rangers last year. The German began this season as manager of English Championship side Fulham but was sacked in September.

Saturday January 10

AFGHANISTAN: Former national coach Mohammad Yousef Kargar is attacked by four men outside his home, just outside the capital Kabul, and stabbed.

ASIAN CUP: China, South Korea and Uzbekistan all start their campaigns in Australia with victories.

EGYPT: Al Ahly and Al Masry draw 1-1 in the first game between the two sides since the Port Said tragedy in 2012 when riots claimed the lives of more than 70 fans. The match is played behind closed doors at a neutral venue in Gouna.

ENGLAND: A 2-0 victory over Newcastle United sends Chelsea clear at the top of the Premier League as Manchester City are held by Everton. Queens Park Rangers lose 2-1 at Burnley and become the first English top-flight side to lose their opening 10 away league ➤

games for 50 years.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain blow a two-goal lead to lose 4-2 at relegation-threatened Bastia and miss the chance to claim top spot in the league for the first time this season. Saint-Etienne remain unbeaten in Ligue 1 since October with a 2-1 victory at Reims. Lille secure back-to-back wins for the first time this season with a 1-0 victory over bottom side Caen.
GERMANY: Wolfsburg's 20-year-old Belgian midfielder Junior Malanda is killed in a car crash on a motorway in north-west Germany.
MEXICO: Apertura winners America win 3-2 at home to Leon – the team they replaced as champions – on the opening day of the clausura in former Leon coach Gustavo Matosas' first game in charge of America.
SPAIN: Quique Sanchez Flores' first league game since his return as Getafe coach ends in a 2-1 defeat at Eibar. After two successive losses, Real Madrid get back to winning ways with a 3-0 victory over Espanyol, although Cristiano Ronaldo fails to score in a home league game for the first time in 15 months.

Joy...Iran's winning start at Asian Cup

Sunday January 11

ASIAN CUP: Pre-tournament favourites Iran begin their campaign with a 2-0 win against Bahrain, while the UAE come from behind to beat Qatar 4-1.
ENGLAND: Southampton win a league game at Old Trafford for the first time in 27 years, beating Manchester United 1-0 to leapfrog their hosts into third place. Arsenal beat Stoke City 3-0 and go above their North London rivals Tottenham

Argentina

JOEL RICHARDS

Thirty is the new 20

Expanded top flight will see a weekend of *clasicos*

Matchday 24 of the new season promises much. The Julio Humberto Grondona 2015 Championship will be in the home straight, with just six games remaining. Scheduled for September 13, it will be an historic weekend, with a dizzying total of 15 top-flight *clasicos* being played.

There will be the country's number one derby, the *superclasico*, with River Plate at home to Boca, but there is also Independiente against Racing. Huracan are at home to San Lorenzo, while Rosario Central host Newell's Old Boys. In La Plata, Estudiantes and Gimnasia will face off. To the south of Buenos Aires, Lanus will host Banfield. To the west, by the Andes, Godoy Cruz will take on local rivals San Martin. In Santa Fe, Colon will be home to Union. It will be a jumbo-sized weekend of *clasicos*.

TV producers will already be scratching their heads over quite how to cover such a football fiesta, given the free-to-air coverage of Argentina's Primera. Apart from the home fans – away supporters are still banned – it will have the country glued to the television.

This prospect of 15 *clasicos* in the same weekend is the plus side of the unprecedented new 30-team league that Argentina's FA has devised – for one year only, though, as plans have already been drawn up for reducing the number of teams in 2016.

The fact there are so many downsides to the new format was laid out clearly by the very clubs who will be taking part in this competition.

The league takes the name of the man whose idea it was and who governed the national game for 35 years. Though Grondona died after the World Cup, the highly controversial change in the league format nonetheless went ahead.

Clubs with the larger support bases, such as River and Boca, were primarily concerned at how the £93million of TV money will be shared out with 10 more teams in the first division. The larger clubs are also those with the larger debts to service. "Derby Day" was dreamt up to ensure a 30-match league, and that all derbies are played home and away. In the absence of traditional rivals, some will simply have to make do with new-found rivalries. Velez Sarsfield were paired up with Tigre, in the absence of Ferro. Olimpo and Sarmiento have never played in the first division, but are also paired up. Crucero del Norte, meanwhile, from north of the country, will travel over 800 miles to play Aldosivi.

It is not surprising Crucero del Norte have no historic rival, having been founded only in 1988 and are now on the eve of playing their first top flight match when the season kicks off in mid-February. The club website has claimed "nearly 200" new members have signed up.

Such is the generosity of the new format that it enabled debutants and sides long estranged from the top flight to reach the first division. Temperley return after a 27-year absence, having being relegated the year before Crucero del Norte were founded.

It will be curious to see how the more modest teams, such as Crucero, fare against the sides with larger fan bases and richer histories. After a number of years in which many of the traditional "big five" have struggled, last year was something of a resurgence for the *grandes*.

San Lorenzo won the Libertadores Cup for the first time, River Plate and Racing both won the league, Independiente improved vastly on the previous year and though Boca had the weakest year of the five, they feel coach Rodolfo Arruabarrena can shape a side to his liking after a transfer window and full pre-season to work with.

Cesar Luis Menotti recently told the magazine *El Grafico* how impressed he is with the young group of coaches working in Argentina, with Marcelo Gallardo at River, Mauricio Pellegrino at Estudiantes, Arruabarrena at Boca and Diego Cocca at Racing among those he named.

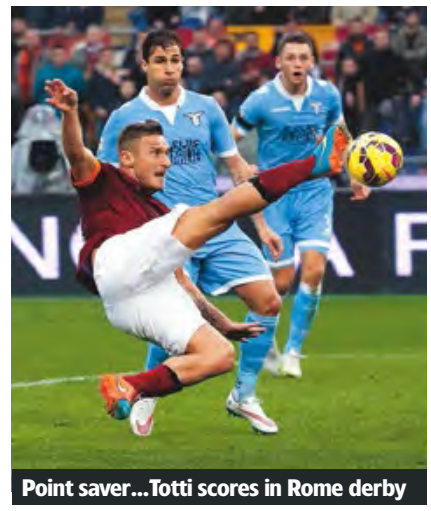
The challenge for them now is to ensure the quality of football in Argentina, already lowered by the constant exporting of players, is not further diluted by the expansion to a 30-team first division. **WS**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Two teams will be relegated and two promoted from the 2015 tournament. There will then be a short Transition tournament, from February to June 2016, with three relegated and one promoted. From August 2016 there will be a full-length tournament again.

The idea is to eventually return to a 20-team division as soon as possible, played alongside the European calendar.

Hotspur in the table.
FRANCE: A 3-0 victory over Toulouse sees Lyon overtake Marseille at the top of Ligue 1.
HUNGARY: The death is announced of Jeno Buzanszky, the last surviving member of Hungary's formidable 1950s national team.
INDIA: Bengaluru beat Dempo 2-1 in the Federation Cup Final.
ITALY: Juventus win 3-1 away to Napoli – their first victory at the Stadio San Paolo for 15 years. Francesco Totti scores twice as Roma come from two down to draw 2-2 with Lazio in the *Derby della Capitale*.
PORTUGAL: At the 16th time of asking, Gil Vicente win their first league game of the season, beating Penafiel 2-1 in a game which saw two players from each side sent off.
SPAIN: Barcelona beat Atletico Madrid 3-1, while Elche move off the bottom of the table with a 2-1 win at Athletic Bilbao.
SWEDEN: Nineteen-year-old midfielder Kristoffer Olsson, whose loan move from Arsenal to Danish league leaders Midtjylland was made permanent in December, fractures a leg during his first training session with the national side. He is ruled out of the tour to Abu Dhabi, where a squad of Scandinavian-based players will play friendlies against the Ivory Coast and Finland.
VENEZUELA: Apertura winners Trujillanos begin the clausura with a 1-1 draw at home to Aragua.


Point saver...Totti scores in Rome derby

Monday January 12

ASIAN CUP: Defending champions Japan cruise to a 4-0 win over debutants Palestine in their opening group match. Iraq beat Jordan 1-0 ➤

Derbies galore... Estudiantes (left) and Gimnasia will lock horns again on a spectacular league weekend

SOUTH AMERICAN LEAGUE ROUND-UPS

● BOLIVIA
Bolivar claimed the apertura title on the final day of the season, beating Blooming 3-0 to finish four points clear of Oriente Petrolero, who went down 2-1 to third-place The Strongest.

Juanmi Callejon, Juan Carlos Arce and Jose Luis Capdevila scored the goals that gave Bolivar their first title since they won the 2013 clausura.

Paraguayan coach Celso Ayala took charge of Sport Boys, replacing Victor Hugo Antelo, ahead of the start of the clausura campaign.

● CHILE
After an absence of 35 years, Palestino returned to the Libertadores Cup – where they join Colo Colo and Universidad de Chile – after beating Santiago Wanderers 9-2 on aggregate in the Final of the play-off for the third continental spot. The last time they were in the Libertadores, in 1979, Palestino reached the semi-finals.

Champions...Santa Fe celebrate

● COLOMBIA
Santa Fe won the clausura championship, beating Medellin 3-2 on aggregate to claim their first title since the 2012 apertura. Having come from behind to win the first leg 2-1, with two goals in three minutes from Francisco Meza and Wilson Morelo, Sante Fe drew the return at home with a strike by Luis Carlos Arias.

Envigado, who finished the Torneo Finalizacion in 14th place, were put on a US blacklist for alleged ties to a drug cartel. The treasury department froze all its US assets and barred Americans from doing business with the club and its owner, Juan Pablo Upegui, who is accused of using Envigado as a front to launder money on behalf of a cocaine trafficking organisation that inherited the underworld connections of Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel.

Deportes Tolima beat Santa Fe 3-2 on aggregate to win the Colombian Cup for the first time and qualify for the 2015 Sudamericana Cup.

Goal hero...Emelec's Mena

● ECUADOR
Emelec won back-to-back Primera A titles, beating second-stage winners Barcelona 4-1 on aggregate in the two-leg, third-stage play-off.

Ismael Blanco salvaged a draw for hosts Barcelona in the first leg with two minutes left, cancelling out Angel Mena's goal for the first-stage winners. Emelec then cruised to a 3-0 victory in the return, with Mena and Miler Bolanos (twice) on target. Barcelona's Alex Bolanos was sent off for a crude challenge on his brother Miler, who is on loan at Emelec from LDU Quito.

Nine clubs in this year's 12-team championship will have new coaches, including defending champions Emelec (Gustavo Quinteros) and last year's runners-up Barcelona (Ruben Israel).

● PERU
Clausura winners Sporting Cristal were crowned overall national champions for the first time since 2012 after they beat apertura winners Juan Aurich in a Primera Division play-off decider.

A third game was needed after the sides drew 2-2 on aggregate – away goals do not count – and substitute Edinson Chavez's late goal gave Sporting Cristal a 3-2 win in extra time at the Estadio Mansiche in Trujillo.

USA

PAUL GARDNER

Show some respect!

New Yorkers angry over Lampard contract shambles

New Yorkers, who like to consider their city the capital of the world, are a pretty tough crowd who can deal with almost anything. But they draw the line at disrespect – as the guys running the new club, New York City FC, have now discovered.

Having announced in July last year that Frank Lampard had signed a two-year deal with NYCFC that would begin in August, further news followed that the 36-year-old midfielder's arrival would be delayed until January 1, 2015, because he was going on loan to Manchester City.

This raised a lot of eyebrows and some doubts about Lampard's ability to talk straight. When his signing was announced, he had let it be known that, while he wanted to prolong his career, he did not feel he could do that with a Premier League club because of his long affiliation with Chelsea.

And yet it was announced that there would be this delay while he played the first four months of the 2014-15 English season with City. Manchester City's own website, discussing the loan, said it was arranged to enable Lampard to stay match fit for his New York debut in January.

The player had already made a flying visit to Manhattan in July 2014 to be officially introduced to fans and media, although even that had not gone quite as smoothly as it might have. There were plenty of American journalists who recalled his grotesque behaviour in 2001 when, right after the 9/11 terror attacks, he and a group of Chelsea players mocked US travellers at London's Heathrow Airport. Talk about disrespect.

During his early months with Manchester City, Lampard proved to be of considerable worth, scoring valuable goals and playing a major role in the club's ability to cope with a rash of injuries. A leading English football writer declared that City needed Lampard so "Manhattan can surely wait". More disrespect.

Then, at some point, that announcement about Lampard going to New York in January disappeared from the Manchester City website – along with the word "loan", which never came up again.

Instead, there arrived the news that thoroughly riled NYCFC's nascent fan group. Lampard would be staying with City until the end of the English season and would not join NYCFC until July 2015 – halfway through the MLS campaign.

The New York club's fan group The Third Rail called the decision outrageous and pointed out that thousands of fans had already bought season tickets at least partially based on the assurance that Lampard would be with the team all season. Why wasn't NYCFC asserting itself, they asked, telling Manchester City that it had a signed deal with Lampard and demanding that he come to New York?

> "We've learned lessons from this, and those lessons are that transparency is more and more important"
>
> MLS commissioner Don Garber

Mixed messages...Garber

The mess was to get worse. NYCFC was obliged to admit that it had never signed an agreement with Lampard. He was not their player. He had signed a contract with City Football Group, an umbrella company that owned both Manchester City and NYCFC. According to the Premier League, who conducted its own investigation, everything was hunky-dory because Lampard had signed only one contract – and this was with City. He was not on loan, he was Manchester City's player.

Suspicions were raised that some sort of financial chicanery was at work, with City seeking to dodge UEFA's financial fairplay rules. Others alleged that it was clear that NYCFC was going to be nothing more grandiose than a farm team for the English club. New York is not used to being a farm team.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber defended NYCFC against the farm-team jibe, but criticised them for "an error of judgment" for misrepresenting Lampard's "contract" from the start. Things were not that simple.

All change...everything seemed cut and dried when Lampard was presented as a New York City player last July

The unusual "single entity" structure of MLS means that players do not sign player contracts with their clubs. They sign directly with the league. Given that, it seems inexplicable that Garber, the league's top man, would not know that MLS did not have a playing contract with Lampard.

Garber was correct in saying that most Designated Players – a special category for high-salary earners in MLS – arrived in July anyway, after the end of the European season.

Garber also admitted that "we've learned lessons from this" – namely that transparency is important. Is he saying that they didn't already know that? It sounds like that. But the more worrying aspect of the whole fiasco is that the people at City Football Group profess to have been unaware about what they were doing. They deny it was deliberate deception, but it would sure as hell look like it.

Thus endeth, or pauseth, the saga of Lampsgate. It is not an episode that has gone down well with New York fans.

There is one more possible twist, though, one that David Beckham managed to introduce, and that is injury. While playing for Milan on loan in January 2010, Beckham tore his left Achilles tendon, causing him to miss almost all the 2010 Los Angeles Galaxy season. Beckham was then 34; Lampard is two years older. **WS**

in the day's second game.

GERMANY: Schalke announce the loan signing of defender Matija Nastasic from Manchester City, subject to a medical.

SPAIN: Valencia, who are fifth in La Liga, extend the contract of Portuguese coach Nuno Espirito Santo until June 2018.

UAE: Liverpool and Morocco winger Oussama Assaidi signs for Al Ahli.

SWITZERLAND: Cristiano Ronaldo wins the FIFA Ballon d'Or for a third time at a gala ceremony in Zurich. Lionel Messi is second, with Manuel Neuer in third.

Tuesday January 13

ASIAN CUP: South Korea and Australia qualify from Group A, beating Kuwait and Oman respectively. However, Korean midfielder Lee Chung-yong is ruled out of the rest of the tournament with a hairline fracture in his right tibia, suffered in his side's opening win over Oman.

BRAZIL: The CBF announces that third-party ownership of players will become illegal in Brazil from May 1, bringing the country in line with a FIFA ban on the practice.

ENGLAND: Valencia midfielder Carles Gil joins Aston Villa for a reported £3.2m. There are wins on penalties for West Ham United at home to Everton and Fulham at Wolverhampton Wanderers in FA Cup third-round replays. West Ham's goalkeeper Adrian is the shoot-out hero, the Spaniard taking off his gloves before beating compatriot Joel Robles to score the decisive spot-kick – the first of his career.

ITALY: Nigel De Jong grabs a late winner, four minutes from time, as Milan beat Sassuolo 2-1 in the Italian Cup.

RUSSIA: Former national captain Roman Shirokov moves to Krasnodar on loan from Spartak Moscow until the end of the season.

SPAIN: Felipe Caicedo scores twice in the last 11 minutes as Espanyol overturn a 2-1 first-leg defeat and beat Valencia 3-2 on aggregate in the Spanish Cup.

USA: DC United sign Finland midfielder Markus Halsti from Swedish club Malmo. USA midfielder Mix Diskerud agrees to play for New York City.

Wednesday January 14

ASIAN CUP: North Korea score their first Asian Cup goal in 23 years, but Saudi Arabia come back to win 4-1. China's 2-1 win over Uzbekistan later in the day puts them in the quarter-finals and confirms North Korea's elimination.

BELGIUM: Anderlecht midfielder Dennis Praet wins the Belgian Golden Shoe as the country's player of the year, ahead of Club Brugge midfielder Victor Vazquez. Praet's team-mate Youri Tielemans is named Talent of the Year, while Besnik Hasi of Anderlecht wins the Coach of the Year award. Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois retains his title of Best Belgian Player Abroad.

ENGLAND: Manchester City complete the signing of Wilfried Bony from Swansea City for an initial £25m. The 26-year-old agrees a four-and-a-half-year deal, with Swansea to receive up to a further £3m in performance-related add-ons. Tottenham Hotspur come from two down at home in eight minutes to beat Burnley 4-2 and reach the fourth round of the FA Cup.

Pure gold...Praet is Belgium's player of the year

FRANCE: Released by Newcastle United and all set to join Nice, FIFA stop Hatem Ben Arfa's registration as he has already played for two sides this season.

PORTUGAL: Cristiano Ronaldo is named Portugal's player of the century, ahead of Eusebio and Luis Figo, at a gala to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the country's football federation. Chelsea's Jose Mourinho is Portuguese coach of the century.

SPAIN: Costa Rica World Cup midfielder Celso Borges joins Deportivo La Coruna from Swedish side AIK until the end of the season, with an option for the La Liga side to sign him for two more years. Real Sociedad coach David Moyes is sent to the stands as his side draw 2-2 with Villarreal in the Spanish Cup and go out 3-2 on aggregate. Athletic Bilbao scrape into the last eight of the competition after losing 2-0 at home to Celta Vigo on the night but drawing 4-4 on aggregate.

SWEDEN: Malmo sign 25-year-old Swedish international winger ➤

Tobias Sana from Dutch side Ajax on a four-year deal.
USA: Maurice Edu makes his loan spell from Stoke City to Philadelphia Union permanent.

Thursday January 15

ASIAN CUP: Ali Mabkhout scores the finals' fastest-ever goal, putting the United Arab Emirates ahead within 14 seconds in to their 2-1 win against Bahrain. Iran's 1-0 victory over Qatar sees them join UAE in the quarter-finals.
ENGLAND: Gareth Southgate agrees a one-year contract extension to coach England under-21s, keeping him in the post until the summer of 2017. The 44-year-old succeeded Stuart Pearce in August 2013.
GERMANY: Hamburg midfielder Lewis Holtby, who is on loan from Tottenham Hotspur, breaks his collarbone in a 3-0 friendly win against Eintracht Frankfurt in Dubai.
ITALY: The Italian FA announces goalline technology will be used in Serie A next season. "We are in favour," says the president of the Italian Referees Association, Marcello Nicchi. "This way, if anybody's going to make a mistake, then it will be a machine, because even technology can still get things wrong."
SPAIN: Fernando Torres scores his first goals since returning to Atletico Madrid in a 2-2 draw at city rivals Real to secure a 4-2 aggregate win in the Spanish Cup. Atletico go through to the quarter-finals where they will face Barcelona, who beat Elche 9-0 on aggregate. Eighteen-year-old Croatian midfielder Alen Halilovic makes his Barca debut as a second-half substitute.
USA: The 2018 World Cup gets officially under way – in Miami, Florida – as CONCACAF conducts the preliminary qualifying draw for North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Friday January 16

ASIAN CUP: Hamza Aldaradreh scores four goals as Jordan thrash Palestine 5-1. Yasuhito Endo wins his 150th cap as Japan beat Iraq 1-0 in the other Group D game.
ENGLAND: Jermain Defoe returns from MLS and joins Sunderland from Toronto, while Jozy Altidore goes in the opposite direction. Croatian striker Andrej Kramaric completes his £9.5m move from Rijeka to Leicester City after being granted a work permit.
FIFA: Former France international David Ginola says he will stand against Sepp Blatter for the FIFA presidency, although the 47-year-old ➤

Egypt

MARK GLEESON

Pharoahs pain at Nations Cup absence

Past successes seem an age away for record title-holders

The grand absentee from the African Nations Cup finals in Equatorial Guinea is Egypt, a country who have won a record number of seven titles but whose fortunes have tumbled dramatically in recent years.

The pitiful sight of the Egyptian side meekly surrendering to long-standing rivals Tunisia in their last qualifying game contrasted with years of confident dominance of the continental game and numerous examples of a never-say-die attitude that clinched many a famous last-minute success.

The Pharoahs missed out on the latest African Nations Cup finals after finishing third in their group, behind Tunisia and Senegal, both of whom they lost to in Cairo – results that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Coach Shawky Gharib, a long-time lieutenant through the team's glory years, has since lost his job and one of his predecessors, Hassan Shehata, is among those being considered to take over.

It is the third successive Nations Cup which Egypt has missed, having ended a run of 15 finals appearances from 1974 to 2010.

The subsequent collapse is allied directly to massive political changes in the country, the battle between the security forces and militant football fans, and the retirement of key players as a golden generation ran its course. Together, they have proved cataclysmic for Egypt, a nation that is now on the verge of becoming a second-rate footballing side.

The Arab Spring – the populist uprising against long-standing authoritative regimes – had a dramatic effect across north Africa and took a heavy toll on both national teams and clubs. Only recently have Egyptian authorities re-opened the stadiums to fans previously restricted or banned altogether from attending matches in the wake of the stadium disaster at the Al Masry-Al Ahly game in Port Said three years ago, in which 74 died.

Armed...a security guard watches over the Al Ahly team bus

On neutral ground...Al Ahly's Abdallah Said takes a heavy challenge from Wilson Akakpo of Al Masry in the first game between the clubs since the Port Said disaster two years ago

In with a shout...Shehata could return as national coach

The resultant loss of income for the clubs has hit hard in combination with the general climate of political, economic and social uncertainty.

Egyptian football's blackest day on February 1, 2012 still reverberates although there has finally been a game again between Al Ahly and Al Masry, albeit on neutral territory. It was a relatively low-key affair a week before the Nations Cup kicked off.

The stadium in Port Said, however, remains closed, although back in the league are Al Masry, whose fans were accused of callous killings, along with the police, of the Al Ahly supporters, some thrown to their deaths from the top stands.

The incident underlined the long-standing tensions between the Ultras and the security system in Egypt, which continues to simmer, even if no longer manifested in heady nights of demonstrations in Tahir Square.

Egyptian football has not only had to overcome these setbacks but also the retirement of Ahmed Hassan, Mohamed Barakat, Wael Gomaa and the talismanic Mohamed Aboutrika. Such a significant pool of talent has been, inevitably, impossible to replace.

Mohamed Salah, their key player in this qualifying campaign, made no impact – as has been the case at Chelsea since his move from Basle in Switzerland. **WS**

will need the support of five football associations and must show he has been actively involved in the game for two of the past five years.

GREECE: OFI Crete are docked six points, and fall to third from bottom in the table, for failing to honour the contract of Aleksander Pesic, a 22-year-old Serbian striker who now plays for French club Toulouse.

HOLLAND: Defending champions Ajax restart the Eredivisie after its winter break with a 2-0 win at home to Groningen.

SPAIN: Bottom of the table Granada, who have won just two La Liga games this season and were knocked out of the Spanish Cup on Wednesday, sack coach Joaquin Caparros.

Saturday January 17

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP: Tournament hosts Equatorial Guinea draw 1-1 with Congo in the opening game. Goals from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Malick Evouna give Gabon a 2-0 victory over 2013 finalists Burkina Faso.

ASIAN CUP: Lee Jung-hyup scores the only goal of the game as South Korea beat Australia 1-0 in a feisty encounter to top Group A ahead of the hosts. Oman beat Kuwait 1-0 in the group's dead rubber.

FRANCE: Alexandre Lacazette scores for a seventh successive game in all competitions as Lyon strengthen their position at the top of Ligue 1 with a 2-0 victory at second-bottom Lens. Bottom side Caen win for the first time since October, beating Reims 4-1 at home.

HONG KONG: Eastern beat Kitchee 3-2 in the Final of the Hong Kong Challenge Shield.

ITALY: Palermo striker Paulo Dybala boosts his growing reputation, scoring his 10th Serie A goal of the season in a 1-1 draw with Roma.

Sunday January 18

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP: Zambia draw 1-1 with Congo DR and a late penalty gives Cape Verde Islands the same result against Tunisia.

ASIAN CUP: Uzbekistan book a place in the quarter-finals with a 3-1 victory over Saudi Arabia that sends the three-times champions out. China top Group B with a 2-1 win against North Korea.

BOLIVIA: Defending champions Bolivar kick off their clausura campaign with a 2-0 win away to Real Potosi.

ENGLAND: Santi Cazorla and Olivier Giroud are on target as Arsenal win 2-0 at Manchester City.

PORTUGAL: Benfica stretch their ➤

lead at the top of the table to six points with a 4-0 victory at Maritimo, chalking up their ninth league win in a row and their seventh successive clean sheet.

SPAIN: Lionel Messi scores a hat-trick to make it 28 goals in 27 club games this season as Barcelona win 4-0 at Deportivo La Coruna. Real Madrid beat Getafe 3-0 as keeper Iker Casillas becomes the first player to win 450 games with the club.

Monday January 19

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP: South Africa's Tokelo Rantie misses a penalty with his side 1-0 in front, allowing Algeria to come back and win 3-1. Senegal also come from behind, beating Ghana 2-1 in Group C's earlier game.

ASIAN CUP: Iran top Group C with a 1-0 win over UAE thanks to an injury-time header from Reza Ghoochannejhad, while Bahrain finish with a 2-1 victory against Qatar.

CYPRUS: Refs will boycott domestic games for one week after the home of an official's mother was bombed. Referee Thomas Mouskos' own home is already under police protection following threats after the 2-2 draw between Apollon and Othellos on January 12 in which he awarded a penalty and sent a player off in the opening 22 minutes.

PORTUGAL: Vitoria Setubal sack coach Domingos Paciencia after an 11th defeat of the season at the weekend left the club just two places above the relegation zone.

SCOTLAND: Kenny McDowall resigns as caretaker manager of Rangers for "personal reasons".

SPAIN: Former Atletico Madrid boss Abel Resino is appointed coach of Granada, who are bottom of La Liga and three points from safety.

Tuesday January 20

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP: A late equaliser gives Cameroon a 1-1 draw with Mali. Gervinho is sent off as Ivory Coast are held 1-1 by Guinea.

ASIAN CUP: Younus Mahmood scores for a fourth consecutive finals as Iraq beat Palestine 2-0 to finish second in Group D, behind defending champions Japan who overcome Jordan by the same score.

ENGLAND: Liverpool and Chelsea draw 1-1 at Anfield in the first leg of their League Cup semi-final.

FRANCE: Shock finalists in 2012, fourth-tier US Quevilly do it again, knocking top-tier Bastia out of the French Cup on penalties. Ligue 1 leaders Lyon also go out in the round of 32, losing 3-2 to Nantes.

Honduras

BRYAN KAY

Ticos miffed at Honduran appointment

Former Costa Rica boss Jorge Luis Pinto takes Honduras job

The cynical might suggest Jorge Luis Pinto has a keen sense of irony – and perhaps not a little devilment. Not long after the World Cup, where he led Costa Rica to an unlikely quarter-final berth, the Colombian left as coach of the triumphant *Ticos* amid murmurings of rancour with squad members and, in particular, with assistant coach Paulo Wanchope, who is a national hero.

Pinto has now re-emerged in charge of Honduras, the main regional rivals of *Los Ticos*. And to add an extra level of spice to proceedings, he took over in controversial circumstances from a Costa Rican, Hernan Medford.

A former player and coach of his own country, Medford had only assumed control of Honduras in July, following a dismal World Cup under Colombian leader Luis Fernando Suarez, but he endured an unflattering spell in charge. A poor fifth-placed finish in September's Centroamericana Cup – during which the team lost to El Salvador and Guatemala, and only just overcame lowly Nicaragua – means Honduras must now beat Caribbean minnows Guyana in a March play-off to secure their place at July's Gold Cup. A 6-0 friendly mauling by Japan in November was the final straw.

As news broke that Pinto was set to get his barely vacated job, Medford let loose a stinging critique of the Colombian. A friend and former team-mate of Wanchope, Medford launched a no-holds-barred broadside at his successor, suggesting that Pinto had coveted his job while he was still in charge. Meanwhile, members of the Costa Rica national squad delivered lukewarm reactions on learning of the Honduran appointment, with goalkeeper Daniel Cambronero qualifying his own praise for Pinto as a coach by commenting that the Colombian had inherited a high-quality generation of footballers. He questioned whether Pinto would be able to reproduce the wonders he worked with the Costa Rican squad in Honduras.

Pinto's immediate task is to ensure qualification for the Gold Cup, but before he agreed to take over there were insights into the problems that beset his Costa Rican adventure in the list of conditions to his accepting the new job.

The most telling was his insistence that he choose his own back-room team. That was a privilege not afforded to him when he led Costa Rica. His relationship with Wanchope cast a pall over his time with the Central American champions and led to a war of words as he left. Indeed, Medford was one of those who came to Wanchope's defence as the former striker received criticism in the wake of Pinto's departure.

Replaced...previous Honduras coach Medford

In charge... Pinto (centre) is unveiled as the national coach

> "For me, Jorge Luis Pinto does not exist, this man has no ethics"
> Hernan Medford

Pinto also asked for responsibility over the full national set-up, from the under-15s up to the senior squad.

Then, with the job duly accepted, the intrigue ramped up a notch once more.

Just days after the announcement of his appointment in Honduras, Pinto revealed plans to start a "football project" in Costa Rica. Through his lawyer, Jose Cabezas, he would not elaborate on details, but Cabezas took the opportunity to insist Pinto loved Costa Rica.

Cabezas claimed that, had it been down to Pinto, he'd still be in charge of *Los Ticos* and, crucially, he had not sought the Honduran job in a bid to get back at the Costa Rican national team.

Costa Rica are themselves in the process of selecting a new coach to replace Pinto – which is no mean task given his World Cup exploits. Wanchope has been in temporary charge since Pinto departed; a spell in which, to his credit, he lifted the Centroamericana Cup and defeated Uruguay in a friendly.

After Argentinian coach Ricardo Gareca, who won his country's Premier Division with Velez Sarsfield, turned down the job, calls emerged from the likes of Medford for Wanchope to be given the hot seat permanently. Among the support, he divides opinion, with the Costa Rican Football Federation insisting that, although he has the capacity to one day assume the role, right now he lacks experience. Moreover, federation bosses seem to have their hearts set on another foreign coach.

As the Costa Ricans fumble around for a new boss, the appetite has been whetted for a showdown clash between the two rivals. The possibility of a tetchy meeting in the Gold Cup cannot be discounted, although the likelihood of Wanchope still being in charge is low.

Then comes Pinto's next big task: reaching the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Meetings with Costa Rica during the CONCACAF qualifiers are highly likely. There is also the small order of the next Centroamericana Cup in 2016.

The dynamics of the Costa Rica and Pinto affair in the latter half of last year are sure to add an extra layer of passion to the stakes when they do eventually meet. WS

CONCACAF LEAGUE ROUND-UPS

● COSTA RICA

Saprissa successfully defended their national title and were crowned champions for a 31st time after beating Herediano 5-3 on aggregate to win the 2014 Invierno.

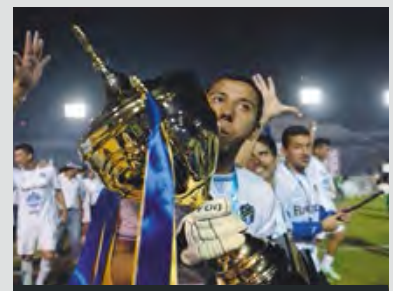
Although they only finished fourth in the regular season, Saprissa beat first-place Alajuelense 2-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals of the second stage. They then won their home leg of the Final 4-2 – with goals from Heiner Mora, Ariel Rodriguez, Juan Bustos and Daniel Colindres – before securing the title with a 1-1 draw in the return, with Deyver Vega on target.

● EL SALVADOR

Isidro Metapan won a third consecutive national title, beating Aguila on penalties in the apertura Final with Milton Molina scoring the winning spot-kick after the game finished 1-1 in extra-time.

Isidro Metapan, who have now been champions on 10 occasions, finished fourth in the regular season and beat first-place Santa Tecla in the semi-finals.

Julio Cesar Dely Valdes left Panamanian side Arabe Unido and replaced Daniel Messina as coach of Aguila at the end of the campaign. He will be assisted by his twin brother Jorge, who stepped down as boss of Panamanian side Tauro.


Champions...Comunicaciones

● GUATEMALA

Comunicaciones won a fifth consecutive league title, beating Municipal 3-2 on aggregate in the apertura Final.

Having drawn 1-1 in the first leg with a goal from Joel Francisco Benitez, Comunicaciones won with two goals from Agustin Herrera in the return to equal Municipal's record of 29 championships.

Uruguayan coach Manuel Keosseian left runners-up Municipal at the end of the season after taking over from Anibal Ruiz for the last three months of the campaign.

● HONDURAS

Motagua were crowned national champions for a 13th time as they beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on aggregate in the apertura Final.

After a goalless first leg, Juan Manuel Munguia cancelled out Carlos Discua's opener for Motagua in the return before Rubilio Castillo struck the host's winner.

Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY

Intriguing tournament awaits

Strong field set for the 56th edition of South America's premier club competition

The performances of San Lorenzo in the Club World Cup were hardly an advert for the quality of South American football – and the same could be said about most of the continent's recent representatives in that competition. However, there is considerable promise in this year's Libertadores tournament.

There are plenty of big teams in a field that contains 14 past winners and not a single debutant. With its cocktail of tradition, atmosphere and exciting youngsters, the next few months should, at the very least, prove intriguing.

Not since Boca Juniors, 14 years ago, has a team managed to retain the title, and it would be a surprise if an ageing San Lorenzo side, stripped of some of last year's heroes, can go all the way this time. But the Argentinian challenge is interesting.

Last year was the first since 2006 that the country provided three of the quarter-finalists – and this time the big boys are back. After a five-year absence, **River Plate** return to the competition, and they do so on a high. Marcelo Gallardo's side, with the attacking spearhead of Colombia's Teo Gutierrez, looked good when winning the Sudamericana Cup last year and they go into this competition among the favourites.

Boca are also back, but they are still in a state of transition, with coach

Preview

Rodolfo Arruabarrena making steady progress, although the loss of defensive linchpin Juan Forlin – the club were unable to renew his loan from Al Rayyan of Qatar – is a blow. A domestic play-off against **Velez Sarsfield** will determine whether Boca go into the group stage or if they must face a qualifying round against **Independiente del Valle**, tricky opponents from Ecuador.

Promising coach Diego Cocca has built a good side at **Racing**, who have a front line to frighten any opponent, with the experience of Diego Milito flanked by the thrust and skill of Gustavo Bou and Ricardo Centurion. Their group looks easy enough, and the fans will surely get behind the club's first Libertadores campaign since 2003.

The most fascinating aspect of the competition will be the Brazilian challenge. Last year only one of the country's representatives made it to the quarter-finals – which is an astonishing failure given the financial chasm that now exists between Brazil and the rest of the continent.

The title had gone to Brazil in the four previous years, but even then they were never as dominant as their financial advantage might have led one to expect.

But having overspent when times were good, those Brazilian clubs are now running into financial problems; demonstrated by the fact that the best two teams last year, the Belo Horizonte pair of **Cruzeiro** and **Atletico Mineiro**, have been forced to sell Ricardo Goulart and Diego Tardelli respectively to Chinese clubs.

Even so, the financial advantage over the rest of the continent remains and is demonstrated by the pair's signing of two of the best players in last year's Libertadores. Argentinian striker Lucas Pratto has joined Atletico from Velez Sarsfield, while Cruzeiro snapped up the Uruguayan playmaker Giorgian De Arrascaeta from Defensor.

Internacional have brought in a Uruguayan coach, Diego Aguirre, to take charge of their campaign, while **Corinthians** welcome back Tite, the outstanding Brazilian coach of his generation who built the compact, solid side that won the league in 2011 and followed it up with the Libertadores and world titles the following year.

First, though, Tite has to revisit the Libertadores campaign of 2011, which ended early with humiliating exit in the qualifying round against Tolima of Colombia. Once again Corinthians have to overcome a team from Colombia to get into the group stage – this time **Once Caldas**, who in 2004 were the last team to win the title that were not from either Brazil or Argentina.

If Corinthians make it through, they will be in the same group as local rivals **Sao Paulo**, who are the most successful Brazilian club in the Libertadores, with three titles. This campaign will mark the farewell of legendary goalscoring goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni and experienced coach Muricy Ramalho has a strong squad at his disposal, even after losing Kaka. The team were far from convincing in last year's Sudamericana, but they have the resources to do much better this time around.

Mexico has underperformed ever since Guadalajara reached the Final in 2010. The country's club sides have the financial strength to hoover up players from all over South America, but their Libertadores entrants are rarely the best Mexico has to offer, and the travelling is also a problem. At least one of **Tigres**, **Atlas** and **Morelia** should reach the quarter-finals, with the former probably the best bet.

While Mexican clubs have taken part in the competition since 1998, **Nacional** of Uruguay – making their 42nd appearance – have a run of consecutive participations that stretches back to the year before that, and in all that time this would seem to be one of their strongest squads. They were the last Uruguayan winners, in 1988, and although a repeat would seem unlikely, they could mount a challenge. First though, they must get past Chile's **Palestino**, whose league got underway at the start of January and who should therefore be much closer to full fitness.

In recent seasons **Universidad de Chile** have led their country's challenge – and Uruguayan coach Martin Lasarte has finally taken them out of the shadow of current national coach Jorge Sampaoli. However, they look open defensively – and the same applies to **Colo Colo**, who are back in the competition for the first time since 2011. Under coach Hector Tapia they played some fine football in 2014, with veteran midfielder Jaime Valdes especially impressive. But the squad is ageing and they have been drawn in a difficult group.

Quarter-finalists last year and beaten finalists in the Sudamericana, Colombia's **Atletico Nacional** are interesting contenders under coach Juan Carlos Osorio, who will have to rebuild after the loss of key players, especially to Mexico. **Emelec** of Ecuador are also worth a look, as under Gustavo Quinteros they have achieved domestic domination while picking up international experience. Could this be the year they make a continental breakthrough?

One of the competition's delights is its capacity for surprise. In this century it has been rare for a Bolivian club to make it out of the group stage, but last year **Bolivar** went all the way to the semi-finals.

By the time the destiny of the title is decided in early August, the 2015 version is bound to have thrown up something striking. **WS**

● *For the full draw, see page 93*

Key dates

GROUP GAMES
Feb 18, Feb 25, Mar 4, Mar 11, Mar 18, Apr 8, Apr 15 & Apr 22

ROUND OF 16
Apr 29/May 6 & May 6/13

QUARTER-FINALS
May 20 & May 27

SEMI-FINALS
Jul 15 & Jul 22

FINAL
Jul 29 & Aug 5

Shock...Cruzeiro (in blue) were upstaged by Defensor last year

Contenders...Gutierrez (centre) will spearhead the challenge of River Plate

Rebuilding...Osorio of Atletico Nacional

Internationals

AFF CUP

(championship for countries in the ASEAN Football Federation, encompassing south-east Asia)

Group A

Played in Hanoi, Vietnam

Nov 22
Philippines 4 (Rota 40, P Younghusband 45+1, Reichelt 77, 88)
Laos 1 (Sayavutthi 21)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Wang Di (Chn)

Nov 22
Vietnam 2 (Que Ngoc Hai 11, Le Cong Vinh 68)
Indonesia 2 (Zamrun 33, Arif 84)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)

Nov 25
Philippines 4 (P Younghusband pen 16, Ott 52, Steuble 68, Gier 79)
Indonesia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** F Al Marri (Qat)
Sent off: Pora (Indonesia) 73

Nov 25
Laos 0
Vietnam 3 (Vu Minh Tuan 27, Le Cong Vinh 84, Nguyen Huy Hung 88)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Adday (Irq)

Nov 28
Indonesia 5 (Evan 8, Lestaluhu 20, 50, Zamrun 82, Souksavanh og 89)
Laos 1 (Sayavutthi pen 28)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Adday (Irq)
Sent off: Nasir (Indonesia) 27

Nov 28
Vietnam 3 (Ngo Hoang Thinh 9, Vu Minh Tuan 51, Pham Thanh Luong 58)
Philippines 1 (Mulders 60)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)

AFF CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vietnam (Q)	3	2	1	0	8	3	7
Philippines (Q)	3	2	0	1	9	4	6
Indonesia	3	1	1	1	7	7	4
Laos	3	0	0	3	2	12	0

Group B

Played in Singapore

Nov 23
Malaysia 0
Myanmar 0
Ref: Kurbanov (Tkm)
Sent off: Robbat (Malaysia) 35

Nov 23
Singapore 1 (Khairul Amri 20)
Thailand 2 (Mongkol 9, Chappuis pen 89)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)

Nov 26
Malaysia 2 (Amri 28, Safiq 61)
Thailand 3 (Adisak 43, 90, Chappuis 72)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)

Nov 26
Myanmar 2 (Kyaw Zayar Win 55, Kyaw Ko Ko pen 62)
Singapore 4 (Shaiful 15, Hariss 35, 42, Khin Maung Lwin og 75)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Tantashev (Uzb)

Nov 29
Singapore 1 (Khairul Amri 83)
Malaysia 3 (Safee 61, Safiq pen 90+3, Indra 90+5)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)

Nov 29
Thailand 2 (Tanaboon 12, Prakit 84)
Myanmar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kurbanov (Tkm)

AFF CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Thailand (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	3	9
Malaysia (Q)	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Singapore	3	1	0	2	6	7	3
Myanmar	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

● *Top 2 in both groups qualified for semi-finals*

Semi-finals

1st legs

Dec 6 - Manila
Philippines 0
Thailand 0
Ref: Balideh (Qat)
Sent off: Adisak (Thailand) 68

Dec 7 - Shah Alam
Malaysia 1 (Safiq pen 14)
Vietnam 2 (Vo Huy Toan 32, Nguyen Van Quyet 60)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ma (Chn)

2nd legs

Dec 10 - Bangkok
Thailand 3 (Chanathip 6, Kroekrit 57, 86)
Philippines 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kim Sang-woo (SKo)
Thailand 3-0 on agg
Sent off: Steuble (Philippines) 82

Dec 11 - Hanoi
Vietnam 2 (Le Cong Vinh pen 22, 79)
Malaysia 4 (Safiq 4, Norshahrul 16, Dinh Tien Thanh og 29, Shukor 43)
HT: 1-4. **Ref:** Toma (Jap)
Malaysia 5-4 on agg

Final

1st leg

Dec 17 - Bangkok
Thailand 2 (Chappuis pen 72, Kroekrit 86)
Malaysia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

2nd leg

Dec 20 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 3 (Safiq pen 7, 58, Indra 45+2)
Thailand 2 (Chappuis 82, Chanathip 87)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)
Thailand 4-3 on agg

Previous winners

1996	Thailand
1998	Singapore
2000	Thailand
2002	Thailand
2005	Singapore
2007	Singapore
2008	Vietnam
2010	Malaysia
2012	Singapore

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, December 17

Dec 17 - Shenzhen
China 2 (Gao Lin 76, Yang Xu 81)
Kyrgyzstan 0
HT: 0-0

Sunday, December 21

Dec 21 - Chenzhou
China 0
Palestine 0

Dec 21 - Dubai, UAE
Uzbekistan 2 (Rashidov pen 30, Alimov 87)
Jordan 1 (Al Saify 15)
HT: 1-1

Monday, December 22

Dec 22 - Sharjah, UAE
Iraq 1 (Mahmoud pen 85)
Kuwait 1 (Maqseed pen 43)
HT: 0-1

Thursday, December 25

Dec 25 - Sharjah, UAE
Iraq 0
Uzbekistan 1 (Iskanderov pen 13)
HT: 0-1

Saturday, December 27

Dec 27 - Doha
Qatar 3 (Muntari 23, Abdelkarim 30, Ismail Mohamad 36)
Estonia 0
HT: 3-0

Sunday, December 28

Dec 28 - Sharjah, UAE
Uzbekistan 0
Iraq 0

Tuesday, December 30

Dec 30 - Geelong, Australia
Bahrain 4 (Aaish pen 20, Al Husaini 26, Abdullatif pen 58, 80)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Hazazi 47)
HT: 2-0

Dec 30 - Gold Coast, Australia
United Arab Emirates 1 (Saleh 90+1)
Jordan 0
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, December 31

Dec 31 - Canberra, Australia
Qatar 2 (M Abdullah 54, 58)
Oman 2 (Al Muqbali 11, Al Owaisi 27)
HT: 0-2

Saturday, January 3

Jan 3 - Campbelltown, Australia
China 4 (Hao Junmin 43, Yu Hai 44, Wu Lei 65, Yang Xu 78)
Oman 1 (Al Siyabi 12)
HT: 2-1

Sunday, January 4

Jan 4 - Wollongong, Australia
Iran 1 (Azmoun 56)
Iraq 0
HT: 0-0
Iran: Beiranvand (Forouzan 65) - Pouraliganji, Ghafouri (Jahanbakhsh 69), Rezaeian, Beikzadeh, Pooladi, Ebrahimi (Nekounam 82), Rafiei (Teymourian 68), Amiri, Azmoun (Ghoochannejhad 74), Ansarifard (Dejagah 75).

Jan 4 - Ballarat, Australia
Jordan 0
Bahrain 1 (Aaish 84)
HT: 0-0

Jan 4 - Sydney, Australia
Saudi Arabia 0
South Korea 2 (Hawsawi og 69, Lee Jeong-hyeop 90+2)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,320
South Korea: Kim Jin-hyeon (Kim Seung-gyu 46) - Park Joo-ho, Kim Jin-su (Lee Myung-joo 46), Lee Keun-ho (Han Kyo-won 90), Son Heung-min (Kim Min-woo 90), Cho Young-cheol (Lee Jeong-hyeop 72), Han Kook-young, Koo Ja-cheol (Nam Tae-hee 46), Jang Hyun-soo, Kim Chang-soo, Kim Ju-young.

Jan 4 - Johannesburg
South Africa 1 (Phala 81)
Zambia 0
HT: 0-0
South Africa: Keet (Khuzwayo 62) - Ngcongca, Matlaba (Hlatshwayo 86), Mathoho, Coetzee, Sangweni (Zwane 52), Letsholonyane (Vilakazi 58), Masango (Phala 74), Manyisa, Ndulula (Parker 44), Rantie.
Zambia: Mweene (Munyao 46) - Nkausu, Musonda (M Mulenga 62), Mtonga, Sunzu (Munthali 55), Kabwe, Sinkala (Sautu 88), Lungu (Chamanga 57), Kalaba, Singuluma, Mayuka (J Mwanza 46).

Wednesday, January 7

Jan 7 - Yaounde
Cameroon 1 (Etoundi 37)
DR Congo 1 (Bolasie 90+3)
HT: 1-0

Friday, January 9

Jan 9 - Casablanca, Morocco
Senegal 1 (Sow pen 68)
Gabon 0
HT: 0-0

Saturday, January 10

Jan 10 - Nelspruit, South Africa
Burkina Faso 5 (Alain Traore 12, Machawe og 44, Koffi 68, B Traore 76, Bance pen 79)
Swaziland 1 (Mthunzi 8)
HT: 2-1

Jan 10 - Libreville, Gabon
Cameroon 1 (Aboubakar 6)
South Africa 1 (Vilakazi 76)
HT: 1-0
Cameroon: Ondoa - Bedimo, Chedjou, Bagnack, Guihoata, Mandjeck, Loe, N'Jie, Etoundi, Salli, Aboubakar. *Subs used:* N'Dy Assembe, Kweuke, Zoua, Kom, Ekeng, Djeugoue.
South Africa: Khuzwayo (Mabokgwane 89) - Coetzee, Hlatshwayo, Matlaba, Ngcongca, Furman, Jali (Phala 68), Zwane (Masango 80), Manyisa, Parker (Vilakazi 46), Rantie.

Jan 10 - Dakar, Senegal
Cape Verde 3 (N'Ganga og 53, Kuca 57, Djaniny 70)
Congo 2 (Bifouma 15, Oniangue 30)
HT: 0-2

Sunday, January 11

Jan 11 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Nigeria 0
Ivory Coast 1 (Kalou 84)
HT: 0-0
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, K Toure, Bertrand, Kanon, Tiote, Y Toure (Kalou 46), Die, Assale, Tallo, Gervinho.

Jan 11 - Rades
Tunisia 1 (Khazri 44)
Algeria 1 (Cadamuro 39)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Ennouni (Mor)
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi - H Mathlouthi, Maaloul, Abdennour, S Ben Youssef, Saihi (Sassi 84), Ragued (Nater 59), Chikhaoui, Khazri (Msakni 74), F Ben Youssef (Moncer 75), Khelifa (Younes 35).
Algeria: M'Bolhi - Mandi, Medjani, Cadamuro, Mesbah, Lacen (Taider 46), Bentaleb, Feghouli (Kadir 67), Brahimi (Soudani 67), Mahrez (Belfodil 46), Slimani (Bougherra 46). *Sent off: Cadamuro 43.*

Tuesday, January 13

Jan 13 - Nelspruit, South Africa
Botswana 0
Burkina Faso 2 (Zongo 27, Bance 30)
HT: 0-2

Jan 13 - Casablanca, Morocco
Senegal 5 (D N'Doye 32, 45, Mbodj 58, Alfred N'Diaye 71, Konate 90+2)
Guinea 2 (Constant pen 75, Conte 90+3)
HT: 2-0

Wednesday, January 14

Jan 14 - Libreville, Gabon
Mali 0
South Africa 3 (Hlatshwayo 37, Vilakazi 82, Furman 85)
HT: 0-1
South Africa: Mabokgwane - Nhlapho (Gcaba 71), Ngcongca, Hlatshwayo (Mathoho 79), Matlaba, Furman, Jali, Masango (Manyisa 71), Phala, Ndulula (Zungu 85), Vilakazi.

Thursday, January 15

Jan 15 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Sweden 2 (Martensson 65, Rohden 87)
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 0-0
Sweden: Olsen - Krafth (J Larsson 56), E Johansson, Karlsson, Augustinsson (Gustafsson 74), Lewicki, Rohden, Martensson (Holmen 89), Elmander (Tinnerholm 64), Kiese Thelin (Ishak 82), Bahoui (Barkroth 85).
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bertrand, K Toure (Viera 46), Kanon (Tiene 46), Y Toure (Doukoure 72), Tiote (Die 72), Gradel, Gervinho, Kalou (Doumbia 46), Bony (L Traore 79).

Friday, January 16

Jan 16 - Orlando, USA
Canada 1 (De Rosario 71)
Iceland 2 (Steindorsson 6, Vilhjalmsson 42)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Jurisevic (USA)
Canada: Stamatopoulos - Ouimette, Jakovic, James, Attakora (Clarke 71), Straith (Mannella 68), Teibert (Bernier 56), De Guzman (Nakajima-Farran 56), Piette, Osorio (De Rosario 46), Hume (Tissot 46).
Iceland: Halldorsson (I Jonsson 65) - T Bjarnason, Ingason, Ottesen, Valgardsson, R Gislason (Omarsson 87), Palsson (Valdimarsson 46), Sigurjonsson, Steindorsson (Fridjonsson 46), Vilhjalmsson (Sverrisson 46), Bodvarsson (Finsen 71).

Saturday, January 17

Jan 17 - Dubai, UAE
Nigeria 2 (Udoh 25, Egwuekwe 64)
Yemen 0
HT: 1-0

Club football

WORLD

CLUB WORLD CUP

Played in Morocco

Play-off match

Dec 10 - Rabat
Moghreb Tetouan (Mor) 0
Auckland City (NZ) 0
Aet. Auckland City 4-3 on pens
Att: 35,247. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Moghreb: El Yousfi - El Mimouni (Grada 98), Fall, Khallati, Aberhoune, Abdelghani (Ouald El Haj 95), Khadrouf, Jahouh, Naim, El Hardoumi, Iajour (Karouch 46).
Auckland: Williams - Berlanga, Irving, Djordjevic, Iwata, Payne, Vicelich, Bilen, De Vries, Tavano (Issa 107), Tade (White 68).

● *Auckland City qualified for quarter-finals; Moghreb Tetouan eliminated*

Quarter-finals

Dec 13 - Rabat
ES Setif (Alg) 0
Auckland City 1 (Irving 52)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,153. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
ES Setif: Khedairia - Megateli, Mellouli, Arroussi, Boukria, Zerara, Lagraa, Dagoulou (Djahnit 46), Belameiri (Younes 69), Gasmi (Ziaya 65), Benyettou.
Auckland: Williams - Berlanga, Irving, Djordjevic, Iwata, Payne, Vicelich, Bilen, De Vries (White 90+1), Tavano (Issa 86), Tade.

Dec 13 - Rabat
Cruz Azul (Mex) 3 (Torrado pen 89, pen 118, Pavone 108)
Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus) 1 (La Rocca 65)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 22,153. **Ref:** Doue (IvC)
Cruz Azul: Corona - Flores, Rodriguez, Dominguez, Pinto (Valadez 78), Gimenez, Torrado, Baez (Rojas 69), Fabian (Vela 106), Formica, Pavone.
Western Sydney: Covic - Adeleke (Golec 72), Topor-Stanley, Spiranovic, Hamill, Poljak, La Rocca, Bridge, Rukavytsya, Castelen (Cole 78), Haliti (Juric 68). *Sent off: Spiranovic 74, Topor-Stanley 102.*

● *Byes to semi-finals:*
Real Madrid (Spa), San Lorenzo (Arg)

5th-place match

Dec 17 - Marrakech
ES Setif 2 (Mullen og 50, Ziaya 57)
Western Sydney Wanderers 2 (Castelen 5, Vitor Saba 89)
ES Setif 5-4 on pens
HT: 0-1. *No extra-time.* **Att:** 18,458. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
ES Setif: Khedairia - Megateli, Mellouli, Arroussi, Zerara, Ze Ondo, Lamri (Lagraa 64), Ziaya, Gasmi, Younes (Belameiri 77), Djahnit.
Western Sydney: Bouzanis - Adeleke, Mullen, Golec, Alessi, Poljak (Fofanah 79), Baccus (Juric 67), Trifiro, Sotirio (Vitor Saba 67), Castelen, Haliti.

Semi-finals

Dec 16 - Marrakech
Cruz Azul 0
Real Madrid 4 (Sergio Ramos 15, Benzema 36, Bale 50, Isco 72)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 34,862. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
Cruz Azul: Corona - Flores, Rodriguez, Dominguez, Pinto, Rojas (Valadez 76), Torrado, Bernardello, Gimenez (Fabian 65), Formica, Pavone (Barrera 65).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal, Pepe, Sergio Ramos (Varane 64), Marcelo, Illarramendi, Kroos (Khedira 73), Isco (Jese 76), Bale, Benzema, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Dec 17 - Marrakech
San Lorenzo 2 (Barrientos 45+2, Matos 93)
Auckland City 1 (Berlanga 67)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 18,458.
Ref: Williams (Aus)
San Lorenzo: Torrico - Buffarini, Kannemann, Yepes, Mas, Veron (Romagnoli 68), Ortigoza (Quignon 109), Kalinski (Matos 77), Mercier, Barrientos, Cauteruccio.
Auckland: Williams - Berlanga, Irving, Djordjevic (Issa 96), Iwata, Payne, Vicelich, Bilen, De Vries, Tavano (Burfoot 100), Tade (Browne 90+3).

3rd-place match

Dec 20 - Marrakech
Cruz Azul 1 (Rojas 57)
Auckland City 1 (De Vries 45+2)
Auckland City 4-2 on pens
HT: 0-1. *No extra-time.* **Att:** 38,345.
Ref: Proenca (Por)
Cruz Azul: Corona - Flores, Rodriguez, Dominguez, Vela, Rojas, Torrado, Baez (Gimenez 46), Fabian (Pavone 85), Formica, Valadez.
Auckland: Spoonley - White, Irving, Bilen, Iwata, Payne, Vicelich (Lindsay 80), Burfoot (Issa 57), De Vries, Tavano, Tade (Pritchett 90+1).

Final

Dec 20 - Marrakech
Real Madrid 2 (Sergio Ramos 37, Bale 51)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,345. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Carvajal (Arbeloa 73), Pepe, Sergio Ramos (Varane 89), Marcelo (Fabio Coentrao 44), Isco, Kroos, Rodriguez, Bale, Benzema, Cristiano Ronaldo.
San Lorenzo: Torrico - Buffarini, Kannemann, Yepes (Cetto 61), Mas, Veron (Romagnoli 57), Ortigoza, Kalinski, Mercier, Barrientos, Cauteruccio (Matos 68).

Previous winners

2000	Corinthians (Bra)
2005	Sao Paulo (Bra)
2006	Internacional (Bra)
2007	Milan (Ita)
2008	Manchester United (Eng)
2009	Barcelona (Spa)
2010	Internazionale (Ita)
2011	Barcelona (Spa)
2012	Corinthians (Bra)
2013	Bayern Munich (Ger)

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st knockout round draw

Arsenal (Eng) v Monaco (Fra)
(Feb 25 & Mar 17)
Basle (Swi) v Porto (Por)
(Feb 18 & Mar 10)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Atletico Madrid (Spa)
(Feb 25 & Mar 17)
Juventus (Ita) v Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
(Feb 24 & Mar 18)
Manchester City (Eng) v Barcelona (Spa)
(Feb 24 & Mar 18)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) v Chelsea (Eng)
(Feb 17 & Mar 11)
Schalke (Ger) v Real Madrid (Spa)
(Feb 18 & Mar 10)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) v Bayern Munich (Ger)
(Feb 17 & Mar 11)

EUROPA LEAGUE

1st knockout round draw

(the 8 3rd-placed teams from the Champions League group stage entered at this stage)
AaB (Den) v Club Brugge (Blg)
Ajax (Hol) v Legia Warsaw (Pol)
Anderlecht (Blg) v Dynamo Moscow (Rus)
Celtic (Sco) v Internazionale (Ita)
Dnipro (Ukr) v Olympiakos (Gre)
Guingamp (Fra) v Dynamo Kiev (Ukr)
Liverpool (Eng) v Besiktas (Tur)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
Roma (Ita) v Feyenoord (Hol)
Sevilla (Spa) v Monchengladbach (Ger)
Torino (Ita) v Athletic Bilbao (Spa)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) v Fiorentina (Ita)
Trabzonspor (Tur) v Napoli (Ita)
Villarreal (Spa) v Salzburg (Aut)
Wolfsburg (Ger) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)
Young Boys (Swi) v Everton (Eng)
1st legs - Feb 19; 2nd legs - Feb 26

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

1st round draw

Alianza Lima (Per) v Huracan (Arg)
Corinthians (Bra) v Once Caldas (Col)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) v Cerro Porteno (Par)
Independiente del Valle (Ecu) v *Argentina 6th reps*
Morelia (Mex) v The Strongest (Bol)
Palestino (Chl) v Nacional (Uru)
1st legs - Feb 3-5; 2nd legs - Feb 10-12

● *Winners qualify for group stage*

Group stage draw

Group 1
Atlas (Mex)
Atletico Mineiro (Bra)
Colo Colo (Chl)
Independiente Santa Fe (Col)

Group 2
Danubio (Uru)
San Lorenzo (Arg)
Sao Paulo (Bra)
Corinthians OR Once Caldas

Group 3
Cruzeiro (Bra)
Mineros de Guayana (Ven)
Universitario Sucre (Bol)
Alianza Lima OR Huracan

Group 4
Emelec (Ecu)
Internacional (Bra)
Universidad de Chile (Chl)
Morelia OR The Strongest

Group 5
Montevideo Wanderers (Uru)
Zamora (Ven)
Argentina 4th representatives
Palestino OR Nacional

Group 6
Juan Aurich (Per)
River Plate (Arg)
San Jose (Bol)
Tigres (Mex)

Group 7
Atletico Nacional (Col)
Barcelona (Ecu)
Libertad (Par)
Independiente del Valle OR Argentina 6th reps

Group 8
Guarani (Par)
Racing (Arg)
Sporting Cristal (Per)
Deportivo Tachira OR Cerro Porteno

Group games scheduled to be played between Feb 17 and Apr 22

● *Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round (last 16)*

BOLIVIA

2014-15 APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar (C)	22	14	4	4	52	23	46
Oriente	22	13	3	6	33	18	42
The Strongest	22	11	4	7	39	26	37
J Wilstermann	22	9	7	6	30	25	34
San Jose	22	11	1	10	34	33	34
Blooming	22	8	7	7	29	30	31
Real Potosi	22	8	6	8	23	28	30
Universitario S	22	9	2	11	26	35	29
Nacional	22	7	5	10	29	32	26
Petrolero	22	7	5	10	27	41	26
Sport Boys	22	3	11	8	21	28	20
Universitario P	22	3	3	16	18	42	12

Previous champions (3 most recent seasons)

2011-12	The Strongest (apertura)
	The Strongest (clausura)
2012-13	The Strongest (apertura)
	Bolivar (clausura)
2013-14	The Strongest (apertura)
	Universitario Sucre (clausura)

COLOMBIA

2014 Clausura Final
1st leg - Dec 17; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Independiente Medellin v Santa Fe
1-2, 1-1 (agg 2-3)

Previous champions (3 most recent seasons)

2012	Santa Fe (apertura)
	Millonarios (clausura)
2013	Atletico Nacional (apertura)
	Atletico Nacional (clausura)
2014	Atletico Nacional (apertura)

ECUADOR

2014 2ND PHASE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona[1]	22	15	3	4	33	16	48
Independiente	22	14	4	4	42	18	46
Emelec	22	14	2	6	40	22	44
LDU Quito	22	11	7	4	38	22	40
El Nacional	22	8	5	9	23	26	29
Univ Catolica	22	8	4	10	25	30	28
Cuenca	22	7	7	8	23	29	28
LDU Loja	22	5	7	10	21	31	22
Mushuc Runa	22	4	9	9	19	30	21
Manta (R)[2]	22	5	5	12	25	35	20
Dep Quito	22	4	8	10	17	32	20
Olmedo (R)[2]	22	3	7	12	18	33	16

[1]As 2nd phase winners, Barcelona qualified for the 2014 Championship Final, against 1st phase winners Emelec
[2]The 2 teams with fewest points in the combined 1st/2nd phase table were relegated

2014 Championship Final
1st leg - Dec 17; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Barcelona v Emelec 1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009	Deportivo Quito
2010	LDU Quito
2011	Deportivo Quito
2012	Barcelona
2013	Emelec

PERU

2014 Championship Final
(apertura winners Juan Aurich v clausura winners Sporting Cristal)
1st leg - Dec 14; 2nd leg - Dec 17; 3rd leg[1] - Dec 21
Juan Aurich v Sporting Cristal
2-2, 0-0, 2-3 (aet)
[1]3rd leg required as away goals in 1st 2 legs were disregarded

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009	Universitario
2010	Universidad San Martin
2011	Juan Aurich
2012	Sporting Cristal
2013	Universitario

VENEZUELA

2014-15 APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trujillanos[1]	17	11	3	3	27	15	36
La Guaira	17	10	5	2	25	13	35
Caracas	17	9	4	4	33	16	31
Aragua	17	9	4	4	30	22	31
Anzoategui	17	8	3	6	28	15	27
Mineros	17	6	7	4	20	16	25
Tucanes	17	7	4	6	16	19	25
Lara	17	5	9	3	25	18	24
Carabobo	17	5	9	3	21	20	24
Estudiantes	17	6	6	5	20	21	24
Tachira	17	6	5	6	24	16	23
Zamora	17	5	7	5	19	19	22
Venezuela	17	4	6	7	14	20	18
Metropolitanos	17	3	6	8	16	29	15
Petare[2]	17	2	9	6	8	17	12
Llaneros	17	3	3	11	12	30	12
Zulia	17	2	5	10	12	27	11
Portuguesa	17	1	7	9	11	28	10

[1]As apertura winners, Trujillanos have qualified for the 2014-15 Championship Final, against the clausura winners
[2]3pts deducted because of outstanding debts to a player

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Alajuelense (CR) v DC United (USA)
Olimpia (Hnd) v Herediano (CR)
Pachuca (Mex) v Montreal Impact (Can)
Saprissa (CR) v America (Mex)
1st legs - Feb 24-26; 2nd legs - Mar 3-5

COSTA RICA

2014-15 Apertura Final
1st leg - Dec 14; 2nd leg - Dec 20
Saprissa v Herediano 4-2, 1-1 (agg 5-3)

Previous champions (3 most recent seasons)

2011-12	Alajuelense (apertura)
	Herediano (clausura)
2012-13	Alajuelense (apertura)
	Herediano (clausura)
2013-14	Alajuelense (apertura)
	Saprissa (clausura)

CURACAO

2014 Championship Final
Single leg - Dec 7
Centro Dominguito 0 Centro Barber 1

EL SALVADOR

2014-15 Apertura Final
Single leg - Dec 21
Aguila 1 Isidro Metapan 1
(aet, Isidro Metapan 3-2 on pens)

Previous champions (2 most recent seasons)

2012-13	Isidro Metapan (apertura)
	Luis Angel Firpo (clausura)
2013-14	Isidro Metapan (apertura)
	Isidro Metapan (clausura)

GUATEMALA

2014-15 Apertura Final
1st leg - Dec 18; 2nd leg - Dec 20
Municipal v Comunicaciones 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)

Previous champions (2 most recent seasons)

2012-13	Comunicaciones (apertura)
	Comunicaciones (clausura)
2013-14	Comunicaciones (apertura)
	Comunicaciones (clausura)

HAITI

2014 CLOTURE (CLAUSURA) – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Don Bosco (C)	10	6	3	1	17	5	21
Tempete	10	5	4	1	11	6	19
Mirebalais	10	5	3	2	15	8	18
Racing	10	5	1	4	11	8	16
Petit-Goave	10	5	1	4	11	12	16
America	10	4	3	3	15	8	15
Cavaly	10	4	3	3	12	9	15
Baltimore	10	2	3	5	8	15	9
Racine	10	2	3	5	7	16	9
Aigle Noir	10	1	4	5	6	13	7
Violette	10	1	2	7	2	15	5

Previous champions (3 most recent)

2012	Valencia
2013	Mirebalais
2014	America (ouverture/apertura)

HONDURAS

2014-15 Apertura Final
1st leg - Dec 14; 2nd leg - Dec 20
Real Sociedad v Motagua 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)

Previous champions (3 most recent seasons)

2011-12	Olimpia (apertura)
	Olimpia (clausura)
2012-13	Olimpia (apertura)
	Olimpia (clausura)
2013-14	Real Espana (apertura)
	Olimpia (clausura)

NICARAGUA

2014-15 Apertura Final
1st leg - Dec 13; 2nd leg - Dec 21
Real Esteli v Walter Ferretti 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1)
Walter Ferretti will play the clausura winners in the 2014-15 Championship Final

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round draw

Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby) v Smouha (Egy)
Al Hilal (Sud) v KMKM (Zan)
Al Malakia (SSu) v Kano Pillars (Nga)
AS Pikine (Sen) v Etoile Filante (BuF)
Azam (Tan) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
East End Lions (SLe) v Asante Kotoko (Gha)
Enyimba (Nga) v Buffles du Borgou (Ben)
Fomboni (Com) v Big Bullets (Mwi)
Gor Mahia (Ken) v CNaPS Sport (Mad)
Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) v Township Rollers (Bot)
Kampala City Council (Uga) v Cosmos Bafia (Cam)
Liga Muculmana (Moz) v APR (Rwa)
LLB Academic (Bdi) v Kabuscorp (Ang)
Mangasport (Gab) v Bantu (Les)
Mbabane Swallows (Swa) v Zesco United (Zam)
MC El Eulma (Alg) v Saint George (Eth)
Olympique Bamako (Mli) v Moghreb Tetouan (Mor)
Raja Casablanca (Mor) v Diables Noirs (Con)
Real Banjul (Gam) v Barrack Young Controllers (Lbr)
Recreativo do Libolo (Ang) v Sanga Balende (DRC)
Sewe Sport (IvC) v AS Kaloum (Gui)
Sony Ela Nguema (EqG) v Semassi (Tog)
St Michel United (Sey) v Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf)
Stade Malien (Mli) v AS GNN (Nig)
USM Alger (Alg) v Foullah Edifice (Chd)
1st legs - Feb 13-15; 2nd legs - Feb 27-Mar 1

● *Byes to 1st round:*
AC Leopards (Con), Al Ahly (Egy), Coton Sport (Cam), CS Sfaxien (Tun), ES Setif (Alg), Esperance (Tun), TP Mazembe (DRC)

ANGOLA

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rec Libolo (C)	30	20	9	1	39	13	69
Kabuscorp	30	17	9	4	44	27	60
Benfica Luanda	30	14	13	3	31	18	55
Prim'o Agosto	30	16	4	10	49	31	52
Petro Atletico	30	13	9	8	43	27	48
Bravos Maquis	30	11	11	8	32	23	44
S Esperanca	30	8	16	6	27	24	40
Rec Caala	30	10	10	10	34	29	40
Interclube	30	11	6	13	29	38	39
Progresso S'ga	30	9	10	11	31	33	37
Huila	30	9	5	16	28	42	32
Sport Cabinda	30	7	10	13	25	31	31
Aviacao	30	8	7	15	28	35	31
Prim'o Maio (R)	30	6	10	14	29	40	28
Benfica L'go (R)	30	5	7	18	24	50	22
Uniao Uige (R)	30	5	6	19	16	48	21

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009	Petro Atletico
2010	Interclube
2011	Recreativo do Libolo
2012	Recreativo do Libolo
2013	Kabuscorp

CAMEROON

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coton Sport[1] (C)	36	23	9	4	57	18	75
Cosmos Bafia	36	19	9	8	45	33	66
Unisport	36	18	11	7	32	21	65
UMS Loum	36	19	3	14	32	30	60
APEJES	36	17	8	11	45	40	59
Les Astres	36	17	6	13	47	40	57
New Star	36	17	5	14	39	28	56
Bamboutos	36	16	7	13	34	30	55
Fovu Baham	36	12	14	10	30	27	50
Panthere Nde	36	12	11	13	33	29	47
Union Douala	36	12	11	13	42	36	47
YOSA	36	9	18	9	25	30	45
Canon Yaounde	36	12	6	18	34	42	42
Tonnerre	36	12	5	19	39	41	41
Njalla Quan	36	9	12	15	26	32	39
Renais'nce (R)	36	12	3	21	36	46	39
Scorpion (R)	36	11	6	19	35	61	39
Sable Batie (R)	36	6	14	16	23	48	32
Douala AC[1] (R)	36	5	8	23	31	53	20

[1]3pts deducted for failing to play a game on the scheduled day

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009	Tiko United
2010	Coton Sport
2011	Coton Sport
2012	Union Douala
2013	Coton Sport

COMOROS

2014 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP[1] – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fomboni (C)	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Coin Nord	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Ouani	4	0	3	1	7	8	3

[1]Participants were winners of the separate island leagues on Moheli (Fomboni), Grande Comore (Coin Nord) and Anjouan (Ouani)

KENYA

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gor Mahia (C)	30	17	9	4	43	21	60
Sofapaka	30	16	9	5	49	27	57
Tusker	30	14	11	5	42	25	53
Ulinzi Stars	30	12	15	3	33	20	51
Chemelil Sugar	30	12	12	6	24	16	48
SoNy Sugar	30	9	14	7	27	21	41
Leopards	30	10	11	9	30	25	41
Muhoroni Yth	30	10	10	10	23	28	40
Thika United	30	9	12	9	31	31	39
Mathare Utd	30	10	8	12	19	25	38
Western Stima	30	9	9	12	26	33	36
Ushuru	30	10	3	17	22	40	33
Bandari	30	5	15	10	23	29	30
Com'cial Bank	30	7	8	15	30	39	29
N'bi City Stars	30	4	12	14	18	35	24
Top Fry (R)	30	3	8	19	13	38	17

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009	Sofapaka
2010	Ulinzi Stars
2011	Tusker
2012	Tusker
2013	Gor Mahia

MADAGASCAR

2014 CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CNaPS (C)	6	5	1	0	9	2	16
AS Adema	6	3	0	3	7	9	9
Ajesaia	6	2	0	4	7	9	6
Tanora	6	1	1	4	4	7	4

REUNION

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
St-Pauloise (C)	20	15	3	2	40	12	68
Excelsior	20	14	4	2	40	13	66
St-Pierroise	20	11	8	1	39	9	61
St-Marienne	20	10	5	5	26	20	55
Petite-Ile	20	7	4	9	22	31	45
Jeanne d'Arc	20	4	8	8	17	24	40
Marsouins	20	3	9	8	19	34	38
Bras Fusil	20	3	8	9	23	34	37
St-Louisienne	20	3	7	10	20	27	36
Benedictine	20	2	9	9	9	30	35
Capricorne (R)	20	2	7	11	14	35	33
Tampon'se[2] (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1]4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw, 1pt for a defeat
[2]Withdrew after 10 rounds of games; results annulled

Previous champions (2 most recent)

2012	Saint-Louisienne
2013	Saint-Marienne

SAO TOME E PRINCIPE

2014 National Championship Play-off[1]
1st leg - Dec 13; 2nd leg - Dec 17
Porto Real v UDRA 2-1, 0-1
(agg 2-2, UDRA on away goals)
[1]Between the champions of the Sao Tome league (UDRA) and the Principe league (Porto Real)

SEYCHELLES

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Michel U (C)	18	14	4	0	58	13	46
La Passe	18	10	6	2	44	14	36
Cote d'Or	18	8	7	3	34	17	31
Anse Reunion	18	7	4	7	24	30	25
St Louis Suns	18	6	6	6	26	30	24
N Dynamo	18	5	6	7	23	25	21
Revengers	18	4	6	8	25	28	18
The Lions	18	4	6	8	26	31	18
Lightstars	18	4	6	8	27	41	18
St Francis (R)	18	1	3	14	9	67	6

Previous champions (2 most recent)

2012	St Michel United
2013	Cote d'Or

TOGO

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Semassi (C)	22	11	9	2	24	10	42
Togo Port	22	10	7	5	17	12	37
Anges	22	10	7	5	17	13	37
Foadan	22	8	7	7	21	19	31
Dynamic Tog's	22	8	6	8	27	21	30
Maranatha	22	9	3	10	22	26	30
Unisport	22	6	9	7	14	16	27
ASKO	22	7	6	9	15	18	27
Agaza	22	6	8	8	17	18	26
Gbikinti	22	7	4	11	24	30	25
Gomido (R)	22	6	7	9	21	33	25
Douanes (R)	22	5	3	14	20	29	18

Previous champions (2 most recent)

2012	Dynamic Togolais
2013	Anges

ZAMBIA

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zesco Utd (C)	30	17	8	5	44	25	59
Power D'mos	30	15	12	3	55	23	57
Zanaco	30	16	9	5	54	28	57
Nkana	30	15	7	8	50	29	52
Napsa Stars	30	12	11	7	29	21	47
Nchanga	30	11	9	10	33	32	42
Green Eagles	30	9	11	10	27	25	38
Red Arrows	30	10	8	12	31	31	38
Natl Assembly	30	9	10	11	33	43	37
G Buffaloes	30	8	12	10	38	38	36
Nakambala	30	9	9	12	21	33	36
Konk'a Blades	30	11	3	16	20	33	36
Kabwe (R)	30	8	10	12	24	41	34
Mine Police (R)	30	6	11	13	27	44	29
Indeni (R)	30	6	9	15	26	45	27
Roan Utd (R)	30	4	9	17	21	42	21

Previous champions (4 most recent)

2010	Zesco United
2011	Power Dynamos
2012	Zanaco
2013	Nkana

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary rounds entrants

Al Nahda (Oma), Al Qadsia (Kuw), Al Sadd (Qat), Al Wehdat (Jor), Bangkok Glass (Tha), Bengaluru (Ind), Chonburi (Tha), El Jaish (Qat), Guangzhou R&F (Chn), Ha Noi T&T (Vie), Johur Darul Ta'zim (Mly), Kitchee (HK), Persib Bandung (Ins), Riffa (Bhr), Warriors (Sin), Yadanarbon (Mym)
● *Winners of the 7 2nd preliminary round ties qualify for play-off round*

Play-off round direct entrants

Al Ahli (Sau), Al Jazira (UAE), Al Wahda (UAE), Beijing Guoan (Chn), Bunyodkor (Uzb), Central Coast Mariners (Aus), Kashiwa Reysol (Jap), Naft Tehran (Irn), Seoul (SKo)
● *Winners of the 8 play-off round ties qualify for group stage*

Group stage draw

Group A
Al Nassr (Sau), Lekhwiya (Qat), Persepolis (Irn), *play-off round winner*

Group B
Al Ain (UAE), Al Shabab (Sau), Pakhtakor (Uzb), *play-off round winner*

Group C
Al Hilal (Sau), Foolad (Irn), Lokomotiv Tashkent (Uzb), *play-off round winner*

Group D
Al Ahli (UAE), Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb), Tractor Sazi (Irn), *play-off round winner*

Group E
Binh Duong (Vie), Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (SKo), Shandong Luneng (Chn), *play-off round winner*

Group F
Buriram United (Tha), Gamba Osaka (Jap), Seongnam (SKo), *play-off round winner*

Group G
Brisbane Roar (Aus), Suwon Bluewings (SKo), Urawa Red Diamonds (Jap), *play-off round winner*

Group H

Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn), Kashima Antlers (Jap), Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus), *play-off round winner*

Group games scheduled to be played between Feb 24 and May 6

● *Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round (last 16)*

INDONESIA

2014 Championship Final

Single leg - Nov 7

Persib Bandung 2 Persipura 2
(aet, Persib Bandung 5-3 on pens)

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Persipura
2010 Arema
2011 Persipura
2012 Sriwijaya
2013 Persipura

KYRGYZSTAN

Division split after 14-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014 CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dordoi B (C)	20	15	3	2	67	8	48
Abdish-Ata	20	13	4	3	49	17	43
Alga	20	10	5	5	35	22	35
Alay	20	10	2	8	44	23	32

2014 RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aldier	20	7	3	10	26	57	24
Ala-Too	20	7	2	11	29	34	23
Neftchi	20	6	2	12	11	39	20
Manas (R)	20	0	3	17	10	71	3

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Dordoi-Dinamo Naryn (now called Dordoi Bishkek)
2010 Neftchi
2011 Dordoi Bishkek
2012 Dordoi Bishkek
2013 Alay

MALDIVES

Top 6 after 14-round regular season formed championship group; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014 CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Radiant (C)	19	17	1	1	57	8	52
Maziya	19	14	3	2	61	19	45
Eagles	19	11	2	6	40	22	35
Victory	19	7	2	10	30	33	23
Valencia	19	4	5	10	15	33	17
Mahibadhoo	19	4	2	13	26	58	14

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 VB Sports
2010 VB Sports
2011 VB Sports
2012 New Radiant
2013 New Radiant

SINGAPORE

Top 6 after 22-round regular season formed championship group; teams carried forward full regular-season record

2014 CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Warriors (C)	27	16	5	6	53	35	53
Brunei DPMM	27	15	5	7	63	30	50
Tampines Rvrs	27	14	7	6	44	32	49
Home Utd	27	13	5	9	52	41	44
Albirex	27	13	5	9	51	40	44
Balestier	27	11	7	9	46	34	40

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Singapore Armed Forces
2010 Etoile
2011 Tampines Rovers
2012 Tampines Rovers
2013 Tampines Rovers

TAIWAN

2014 2ND STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Taipower (C)[1]	7	5	2	0	24	3	17
Taichung	7	4	2	1	26	4	14
NSTC	7	4	1	2	19	18	13
Tatung	7	3	3	1	18	9	12
Ming Chuan	7	3	1	3	11	6	10
Air Source	7	2	2	3	9	21	8
Chiayi	7	0	2	5	9	39	2
Tainan City	7	0	1	6	5	21	1

[1]*Taipower are champions because they also won the 1st stage*

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Kaohsiung Yaoti
2010 Kaohsiung County Taipower (now called just Taipower)
2011 Taipower
2012 Taipower
2013 Tatung

TAJIKISTAN

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Istiklol (C)	18	16	2	0	65	10	50
Khayr	18	11	2	5	27	17	35
Istaravshan	18	9	6	3	20	11	33
Khujand	18	9	5	4	24	17	32
Parvoz	18	8	1	9	28	35	25
Regar-TadAZ	18	5	5	8	25	27	20
Energetik	18	5	4	9	17	30	19
CSKA Pomir	18	3	6	9	14	27	15
Vakhsh	18	4	2	12	12	32	14
Ravshan	18	2	3	13	18	44	9

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Vakhsh
2010 Istiklol
2011 Istiklol
2012 Ravshan
2013 Ravshan

THAILAND

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Buriram Utd (C)	38	23	10	5	69	26	79
Chonburi	38	21	13	4	62	33	76
BEC Tero S'na	38	18	14	6	66	41	68
Ratchaburi	38	17	14	7	62	42	65
Muangthong[1]	38	20	11	7	66	36	62
Suphanburi	38	17	8	13	55	49	59
Chiangrai Utd	38	13	16	9	55	47	55
Bangkok Utd	38	15	9	14	55	56	54
Army Utd	38	14	11	13	52	55	53
Bangkok Glass	38	14	7	17	70	65	49
Osotspa	38	11	15	12	53	49	48
Sisaket	38	12	10	16	48	59	46
Singhtarua[1]	38	15	9	14	44	52	45
Chainat	38	10	14	14	43	50	44
TOT	38	10	13	15	38	51	43
Police Utd (R)	38	11	10	17	58	64	43
Rayong (R)	38	10	12	16	49	60	42
Songkhla (R)	38	8	8	22	39	72	32
Air Force (R)	38	6	12	20	35	63	30
Samut S (R)	38	5	4	29	32	81	19

[1]*9pts deducted for fan violence*

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Muangthong
2010 Muangthong
2011 Buriram PEA (now called Buriram United)
2012 Muangthong
2013 Buriram United

TURKMENISTAN

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Altyn Asyr (C)	36	29	5	2	91	25	92
Ahal	36	28	3	5	85	24	87
Sagadam	36	23	4	9	88	39	73
Merw	36	22	2	12	67	44	68
HTTU	36	16	4	16	80	45	52
Balkan	36	15	5	16	47	24	50
Asgabat	36	13	7	16	57	47	46
Talyp	36	6	7	23	24	70	25
Dasoguz	36	5	2	29	22	95	17
Bag'lyk-Lebap	36	2	3	31	18	166	9

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 HTTU
2010 Balkan
2011 Balkan
2012 Balkan
2013 HTTU

UZBEKISTAN

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pakhtakor (C)	26	23	3	0	54	14	72
Lokomotiv	26	20	4	2	58	22	64
Nasaf	26	16	7	3	45	21	55
Bunyodkor	26	15	6	5	44	20	51
Mash'al	26	10	6	10	37	42	36
Olmaliq	26	8	7	11	33	38	31
Navbahor	26	9	3	14	38	41	30
Neftchi	26	7	7	12	19	26	28
Metallurg	26	8	4	14	44	54	28
Sa'nd Dinamo	26	8	4	14	25	39	28
Qizilqum	26	7	6	13	23	34	27
Buxoro	26	6	7	13	23	43	25
Sogdiana (R)	26	7	3	16	32	49	24
Andijon (R)	26	3	3	20	18	50	12

Previous champions (5 most recent)

2009 Bunyodkor
2010 Bunyodkor
2011 Bunyodkor
2012 Pakhtakor
2013 Bunyodkor

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group stage draw

Group A

Gaitcha (NC), Lupe Ole Soaga (Sam), Pirae (Tah), Suva (Fij)

Group B

Amicale (Van), Auckland City (NZ), Ba (Fij), *Solomon Island reps*

Group C

Hekari United (PNG), Tafea (Van), Team Wellington (NZ), Tefana (Tah)

Group games scheduled to begin on Apr 17

● *Group winners and the runner-up with the best record qualify for semi-finals*

COOK ISLANDS

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tupapa (C)	12	9	2	1	59	12	29
Puaikura	12	9	2	1	46	10	29
Avatiu	12	6	3	3	27	22	21
Takuvaine	12	5	1	6	26	27	16
Matavera	12	4	1	7	24	34	13
Nikao Sokattak	12	3	0	9	14	44	9
Titikaveka	12	1	1	10	12	59	4

Previous champions (3 most recent)

2011 Tupapa
2012 Tupapa
2013 Puaikura

NEW CALEDONIA

2014 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
Magenta (C)	22	20	2	0	69	23	84
Lossi	22	17	2	3	60	33	75
Hienghene[2]	22	13	6	3	69	27	57
Mont Dore	22	7	7	8	36	41	50
Wetr[3]	22	9	3	10	52	52	50
Ne Drehu	22	6	7	9	36	43	47
Gaitcha[4]	22	8	4	10	50	51	41
Tiga[5]	22	4	8	10	35	46	41
Kirikitr (R)[7]	22	4	6	12	30	58	40
Auteuil	22	4	5	13	23	40	39
Thio[2] (R)	22	6	4	12	48	63	34
AGJP[6] (R)	22	5	4	13	48	79	29

[1]*4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw, 1pt for a defeat*
[2]*10pts deducted* [3]*2pts deducted*
[4]*9pts deducted* [5]*1pt deducted* [6]*12pts deducted – all punishments for failing to provide referees and/or not fulfilling youth team obligations*
[7]*Kirikitr relegated as team from outside the main island of Grande Terre with the worst record*

Previous champions (3 most recent)

2011 Mont Dore
2012 Magenta
2013 Gaitcha

KEY TO TABLES

(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage

February 2015 Vol 55 No 5

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ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

DECEMBER 2014

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	13 votes
Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus)	11
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	11
Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	5
Claudio BRAVO (Barcelona)	2
Iker CASILLAS (Real Madrid)	2
ROBERTO (Olympiakos)	2
Sergio ALVAREZ (Celta Vigo)	1
Fraser FORSTER (Southampton)	1
Jasmin HANDANOVIC (Maribor)	1
Diego LOPEZ (Milan)	1
Steve MANDANDA (Marseille)	1

DEFENDERS

Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	16
Branislav IVANOVIC (Chelsea)	13
PEPE (Real Madrid)	13
John TERRY (Chelsea)	10
Juan BERNAT (Bayern Munich)	9
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	9
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	7
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	6
Stephan LICHTSTEINER (Juventus)	6
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	6
Jeremy MATHIEU (Barcelona)	6
MIRANDA (Atletico Madrid)	6
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	5
Nathaniel CLYNE (Southampton)	5
JUANFRAN (Atletico Madrid)	5
Ricardo RODRIGUEZ (Wolfsburg)	5
Pablo ZABALETA (Manchester City)	5
David LUIZ (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
NALDO (Wolfsburg)	4
Nicolas N'KOULOU (Marseille)	4
Javier MASCHERANO (Barcelona)	4
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	3
Kostas MANOLAS (Roma)	3
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Valencia)	3
Leighton BAINES (Everton)	2
Mehdi BENATIA (Bayern Munich)	2
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	2
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	2
Ashley COLE (Roma)	2
DANILO (Porto)	2
Jose FONTE (Southampton)	2
MAXWELL (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Dani PAREJO (Valencia)	2
Paul VERHAEGH (Augsburg)	2
Aymen ABDENNOUR (Monaco)	1
Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Southampton)	1
Davide ASTORI (Roma)	1
Alex BRUCE (Hull City)	1
Gary CAHILL (Chelsea)	1
CAICARA (Ludogorets)	1
CARLAO (APOEL)	1
Gael CLICHY (Manchester City)	1
Rod FANNI (Marseille)	1
Jose Luis GAYA (Valencia)	1
Kieran GIBBS (Arsenal)	1
Faouzi GHOULAM (Napoli)	1
Raphael GUERREIRO (Lorient)	1
Benedikt HOWEDES (Schalke)	1
Daryl JANMAAT (Newcastle United)	1
Tin JEDVAJ (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
JEFFERSON (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Manchester City)	1
Filipe LUIS (Chelsea)	1
MAICON (Roma)	1
Eliaquim MANGALA (Manchester City)	1
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Philippe MEXES (Milan)	1
Alberto MORENO (Liverpool)	1
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	1
RAFINHA (Bayern Munich)	1
Karium REFIK (PSV)	1
Winston REID (West Ham United)	1
Danny ROSE (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Martin STRANZL (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1
Gregory VAN DER WIEL (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	1
WENDELL (Bayer Leverkusen)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Arjen ROBBEN (Bayern Munich)	26
Cesc FABREGAS (Chelsea)	23
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	13
Xabi ALONSO (Bayern Munich)	12
Yaya TOURE (Manchester City)	9
Mario GOTZE (Bayern Munich)	8
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	7
Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich)	7
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Wolfsburg)	6
Paul POGBA (Juventus)	6
ISCO (Real Madrid)	5
Radja NAINGGOLAN (Roma)	4
James RODRIGUEZ (Real Madrid)	4
Angel DI MARIA (Manchester United)	3
NANI (Sporting Lisbon)	3
Andrea PIRLO (Juventus)	3
Miralem PJANIC (Roma)	3
ARDA Turan (Atletico Madrid)	2
Jose Maria CALLEJON (Napoli)	2
Giannelli IMBULA (Marseille)	2
KOKE (Atletico Madrid)	2
Frank LAMPARD (Manchester City)	2
Nemanja MATIC (Chelsea)	2
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	2
David SILVA (Manchester City)	2
Arturo VIDAL (Juventus)	2
Gareth BALE (Real Madrid)	1
Karim BELLARABI (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Denis CHERYSHEV (Villarreal)	1
GABI (Atletico Madrid)	1
Yoann GOURCUFF (Lyon)	1
Hector HERRERA (Porto)	1
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	1
Wesley SNEIJDER (Galatasaray)	1
TALISCA (Benfica)	1
Granit XHAKA (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1

FORWARDS

Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	50
Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	20
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	19
Diego COSTA (Chelsea)	16
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	6
NEYMAR (Barcelona)	6
Carlos TEVEZ (Juventus)	6
Graziano PELLE (Southampton)	5
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	4
Wayne ROONEY (Manchester United)	3
Luiz ADRIANO (Shakhtar Donetsk)	2
Paulo DYBALA (Palermo)	2
Andre-Pierre GIGNAC (Marseille)	2
Alexander MEIER (Eintracht Frankfurt)	2
Diafra SAKHO (West Ham United)	2
Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal)	2
Francesco TOTTI (Roma)	2
Paco ALCACER (Valencia)	1
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	1
Alexandre LACAZETTE (Lyon)	1
Jackson MARTINEZ (Porto)	1
Dimitry PAYET (Marseille)	1
Danny WELBECK (Arsenal)	1
Simone ZAZA (Sassuolo)	1

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CLUB WORLD CUP

AUCKLAND CITY (NZ)

GOALKEEPERS

18	Louie **CAUNTER** (Eng)	(21) 24.04.93
24	Jacob **SPOONLEY**	(27) 03.03.87
1	Tamati **WILLIAMS**	(30) 19.01.84

DEFENDERS

2	Simon **ARMS**	(21) 21.01.93
5	Angel **BERLANGA** (Spa)	(27) 24.02.87
17	Marko **DORDEVIC** (Ser)	(31) 22.05.83
6	John **IRVING** (Eng)	(26) 17.09.88
3	Takuya **IWATA** (Jap)	(31) 22.04.83
22	Andrew **MILNE**	(22) 03.01.92
7	James **PRITCHETT**	(32) 01.07.82
15	Ivan **VICELICH**	(38) 03.09.76

MIDFIELDERS

4	Mario **BILEN** (Cro)	(29) 23.01.85
23	Sam **BURFOOT** (Eng)	(20) 10.04.94
16	Kim **DAE-WOOK** (SKo)	(27) 23.11.87
11	Cameron **LINDSAY**	(21) 21.12.92
8	Tim **PAYNE**	(20) 10.01.94

FORWARDS

19	David **BROWNE** (PNG)	(18) 27.12.95
10	Ryan **DE VRIES** (SAf)	(23) 14.09.91
14	Sanni **ISSA** (Nga)	(23) 17.08.91
13	Joao **MOREIRA** (Por)	(28) 07.02.86
20	Emiliano **TADE** (Arg)	(26) 03.03.88
25	Fabrizio **TAVANO** (Mex)	(21) 16.08.93
9	Darren **WHITE** (Eng)	(25) 24.03.89

COACH

Ramon **TRIBULIETX** (Spa)	(42) 20.09.72

CRUZ AZUL (Mex)

Challenge... Valdez (right)

GOALKEEPERS

12	Guillermo **ALLISON**	(24) 25.09.90
1	Jose **CORONA**	(33) 26.01.81
25	Yosgart **GUTIERREZ**	(33) 15.03.81

DEFENDERS

16	Rogelio **CHAVEZ**	(30) 28.10.84
4	Julio Cesar **DOMINGUEZ**	(27) 08.11.87
15	Gerardo **FLORES**	(28) 05.02.86
17	Emanuel **LOESCHBOR**	(28) 16.10.86
2	Fausto **PINTO**	(31) 08.08.83
3	Francisco **RODRIGUEZ**	(33) 20.10.81

MIDFIELDERS

21	Xavier **BAEZ**	(27) 22.07.87
7	Pablo **BARRERA**	(27) 21.06.87
5	Alejandro **CASTRO**	(27) 27.03.87
8	Marco **FABIAN**	(25) 21.07.89
10	Christian **GIMENEZ**	(33) 01.02.81
11	Joao **ROJAS** (Ecu)	(25) 14.06.89
6	Gerardo **TORRADO**	(35) 30.04.79
19	Alejandro **VELA**	(30) 28.03.84

FORWARDS

27	Hernan **BERNARDELLO** (Arg)	(28) 03.08.86
33	Mauro **FORMICA** (Arg)	(26) 04.04.88
9	Mariano **PAVONE** (Arg)	(32) 27.05.82
20	Pablo **TORRES** (Arg)	(30) 10.03.84
18	Ismael **VALADEZ**	(29) 14.09.85
23	Anibal **ZURDO**	(33) 03.12.81

COACH

Luis **FERNANDO TENA**	(56) 20.01.58

ES SETIF (Alg)

GOALKEEPERS

24	Abderaouf **BELHANI**	(28) 26.11.86
1	Sofiane **KHEDAIRIA**	(25) 01.04.89
22	Omar **SAADOUNE**	(21) 19.12.92

DEFENDERS

25	El Hedi **BELAMEIRI**	(23) 24.04.91
18	Lyes **BOUKRIA**	(33) 09.09.81
15	Abdelghani **DEMMOU**	(25) 29.01.89
4	Said **LAAROUSSI**	(23) 23.07.91
26	Mohamed **LAGRAA**	(28) 07.11.86
6	Amine **MEGATELI**	(27) 04.05.87
20	Farid **MELLOULI**	(30) 07.07.84

MIDFIELDERS

21	Issam **BAOUZ**	(24) 30.11.90
30	Eudes **DAGOULOU** (CAR)	(24) 09.02.90
16	Mohamed **RAIT**	(28) 16.05.86
17	Benjamin **ZE ONDO** (Gab)	(27) 18.06.87
29	Toufik **ZERARA**	(28) 03.02.86
19	Abdelmalek **ZIAYA**	(30) 23.01.84

FORWARDS

9	Mohamed **BENYETTOU**	(25) 01.11.89
10	Akram **DJAHNIT**	(23) 03.04.91
8	Ahmed **GASMI**	(30) 22.11.84
91	Ilyes **KORBIAA**	(23) 21.04.91
13	Sid Ali **LAMRI**	(23) 03.02.91
23	Zahir **NEMDIL**	(27) 03.03.87
3	Sofiane **YOUNES**	(32) 25.11.82

COACH

Kheireddine **MADOUI**	(41) 27.03.73

MOGHREB TETOUAN (Mor)

GOALKEEPERS

31	Foued **BABA ALLA** (Fra)	(29) 23.09.85
22	Adnane **EL ASSIMI**	(21) 08.01.93
12	Mohamed **EL YOUSFI**	(23) 18.01.91

DEFENDERS

3	Mohamed **ABARHOUN**	(25) 03.05.89
7	Youssef **BOUCHTAH**	(24) 19.07.90
30	Hamza **EL MOUSSAOUI**	(21) 07.04.93
5	Mourtada **FALL** (Sen)	(26) 26.12.87
6	Mehdi **KHALLATI**	(23) 07.02.91
14	Anas **LAMRABAT**	(21) 13.07.93
16	Bilal **ZAROUH**	(23) 18.01.91

MIDFIELDERS

11	El Mehdi **AZIM**	(27) 22.11.87
24	Abdelmoula **EL HARDOUMI**	(30) 09.02.84
8	Nassir **EL MAIMOUNI**	(23) 20.02.91
23	Said **GRADA**	(27) 18.07.87
20	Ahmed **JAHOUH**	(26) 31.07.88
26	Abdeladim **KHADROUF**	(29) 03.01.85
10	Zaid **KROUCH**	(23) 27.01.91

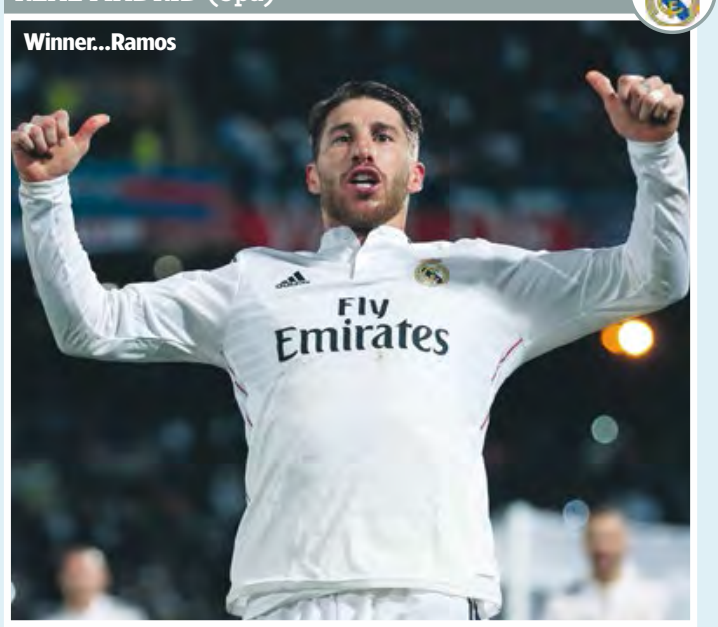
FORWARDS

17	Mohammed **FAOUZI**	(29) 22.02.85
25	Anouar **HADOUIR** (Hol)	(32) 14.09.82
9	Mouhcine **IAJOUR**	(29) 14.06.85
19	Zouheir **NAIM**	(29) 08.11.85
87	Salman **OUALD EL HAJ**	(26) 28.09.88
21	Abdessamad **RAFIK**	(32) 08.04.82

COACH

Aziz **EL AMRI**	(64) 01.01.50

REAL MADRID (Spa)



Winner...Ramos

GOALKEEPERS

1	Iker **CASILLAS**	(33) 20.05.81
13	Keylor **NAVAS** (CR)	(27) 15.12.86
25	Fernando **PACHECO**	(22) 18.05.92

DEFENDERS

17	Alvaro **ARBELOA**	(31) 17.01.83
15	Dani **CARVAJAL**	(22) 11.01.92
5	Fabio **COENTRAO** (Por)	(26) 11.03.88
12	**MARCELO** (Bra)	(26) 12.05.88
18	**NACHO**	(24) 18.01.90
3	**PEPE** (Por)	(31) 26.02.83
4	Sergio **RAMOS**	(28) 30.03.86
2	Raphael **VARANE** (Fra)	(21) 25.04.93

MIDFIELDERS

11	Gareth **BALE** (Wal)	(25) 16.07.89
24	Asier **ILLARRAMENDI**	(24) 08.03.90
23	**ISCO**	(22) 21.04.92
6	Sami **KHEDIRA** (Ger)	(27) 04.04.87
8	Toni **KROOS** (Ger)	(24) 04.01.90
26	Alvaro **MEDRAN**	(20) 15.03.94
10	James **RODRIGUEZ** (Col)	(23) 12.07.91

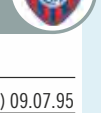
FORWARDS

9	Karim **BENZEMA** (Fra)	(26) 19.12.87
14	Javier **HERNANDEZ** (Mex)	(26) 01.06.88
20	**JESE**	(21) 26.02.93
7	Cristiano **RONALDO** (Por)	(29) 05.02.85

COACH

Carlo **ANCELOTTI** (Ita)	(55) 10.06.59

SAN LORENZO (Arg)



GOALKEEPERS

33	Jose **DEVECCHI**	(19) 09.07.95
1	Leo **FRANCO**	(37) 20.05.77
12	Sebastian **TORRICO**	(34) 22.02.80

DEFENDERS

13	Ramiro **ARIAS**	(21) 06.01.93
27	Matias **CATALAN**	(22) 19.08.92
2	Mauro **CETTO**	(32) 14.04.82
29	Fabricio **FONTANINI**	(24) 30.03.90
14	Walter **KANNEMANN**	(23) 14.03.91
21	Emmanuel **MAS**	(25) 15.01.89
3	Mario **YEPES** (Col)	(38) 13.01.76

MIDFIELDERS

11	Pablo **BARRIENTOS**	(29) 17.01.85
7	Julio **BUFFARINI**	(26) 08.08.88
24	Juan **CAVALLARO**	(20) 28.06.94
8	Enzo **KALINSKI**	(27) 10.03.87
5	Juan **MERCIER**	(34) 02.02.80
20	Nestor **ORTIGOZA** (Par)	(30) 07.10.84
31	Facundo **QUIGNON**	(21) 02.05.93
10	Leandro **ROMAGNOLI**	(33) 17.03.81

FORWARDS

22	Nicolas **BLANDI**	(24) 13.01.90
9	Martin **CAUTERUCCIO** (Uru)	(27) 14.04.87
26	Mauro **MATOS**	(32) 06.08.82
30	Gonzalo **VERON**	(24) 24.12.89
15	Hector **VILLALBA**	(20) 26.07.94

COACH

Edgardo **BAUZA**	(56) 26.01.58

WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS (Aus)

Determined... Poljak (left)

GOALKEEPERS

20	Dean **BOUZANIS**	(24) 02.10.90
1	Ante **COVIC**	(39) 13.06.75
40	Thomas **HEWARD-BELLE**	(17) 11.03.97

DEFENDERS

22	Seyi **ADELEKE** (Nga)	(23) 17.11.91
32	Daniel **ALESSI**	(17) 22.08.97
2	Shannon **COLE**	(29) 04.08.85
6	Antony **GOLEC**	(24) 29.05.90
5	Brendan **HAMILL**	(22) 18.09.92
3	Daniel **MULLEN**	(25) 26.10.89
13	Matthew **SPIRANOVIC**	(26) 27.06.88
4	Nikolai **TOPOR-STANLEY**	(29) 11.03.85

MIDFIELDERS

35	Kearyn **BACCUS**	(23) 05.09.91
31	Alusine **FOFANAH**	(17) 21.11.97
18	Iacopo **LA ROCCA** (Ita)	(30) 17.02.84
8	Mateo **POLJAK** (Cro)	(25) 10.09.89
10	Vitor **SABA** (Bra)	(24) 11.07.90
23	Jason **TRIFIRO**	(26) 03.06.88

FORWARDS

19	Mark **BRIDGE**	(29) 07.11.85
17	Romeo **CASTELEN** (Hol)	(31) 03.05.83
7	Labinot **HALITI**	(29) 26.10.85
9	Tomi **JURIC**	(23) 22.07.91
12	Nikita **RUKAVYTSYA**	(27) 22.06.87
16	Jaushua **SOTIRIO**	(19) 11.10.95

COACH

Tony **POPOVIC**	(41) 04.07.73

(ages as of 10.12.14)

World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

JULY 8, 1982, SEVILLE: WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL

West Germany 3 France 3

Six goals and much controversy in a dramatic semi-final showdown that saw a World Cup game go to penalties for the first time

Assault... Schumacher collides with Battiston

Photo: Offside/L'Equipe

"When great matches of the World Cup are recounted, there will always be a place for this remarkable duel between French skill and West German stamina." So began *World Soccer*'s match report on the 1982 semi-final.

With the teams level 1-1 at half-time, it was the second 45 minutes and beyond that enshrined this match as one of the great World Cup games of all time.

Second-half sub Patrick Battiston had only been on the pitch nine minutes when he was met by the full force of German keeper Harald Schumacher, who hurled himself at the Frenchman, outside his area. Battiston was knocked unconscious and left with two teeth missing, but Schumacher escaped without even a booking.

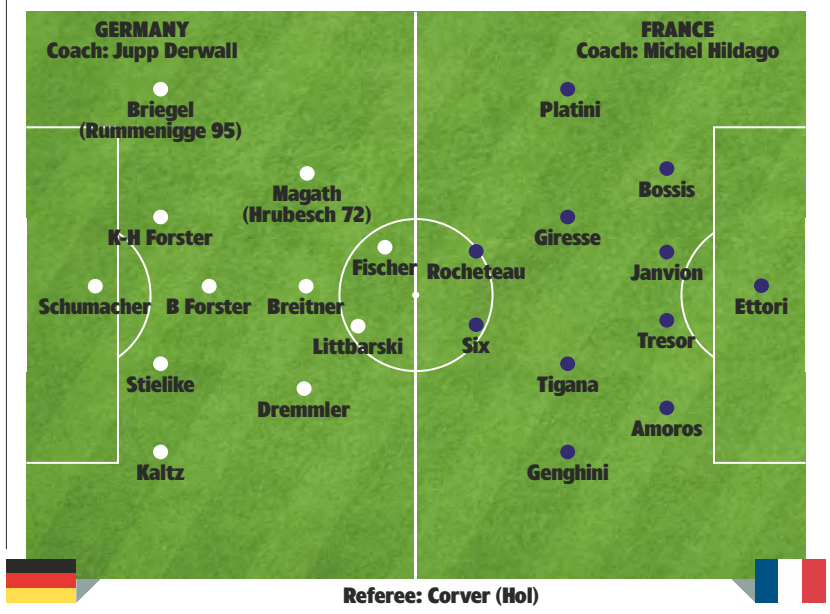
In the September 1982 edition of *World Soccer*, Brian Glanville wrote: "Stretched out on the turf, Battiston made such an alarming figure that there were truly fears that he would never get up again. While he lay prostrate, Schumacher coldly ignored him; when he [Schumacher] left the stadium, he callously announced that he was ready to pay for his dental treatment."

Four further goals in extra time took the game to penalties for the first time ever at a World Cup and the Germans won the sudden-death shoot-out. Keir Radnedge wrote in *World Soccer*'s August 1982 edition: ""That such a fine exhibition of football art at its most dramatic should have been settled by penalties will always be a controversial matter.

"But I believe that the gallant French, though superior in skill on the night, had given so much to their cause that if they, instead, had won the penalty lottery, then Italy would have walked all over them in the Final."

It was, however, West Germany who went on to the Final in Madrid, where they were beaten 3-1 by the Italians. **WS**

Callous...Schumacher



Referee: Corver (Hol)

KEY MOMENTS

Out cold...Battiston is stretchered off

17min Pierre Littbarski puts West Germany ahead. **1-0**.

27min Bernd Forster is penalised for holding Dominique Rocheteau and Michel Platini equalises from the penalty spot. **1-1**.

59min France sub Patrick Battiston is knocked unconscious by German goalkeeper Harald Schumacher.

90min Manuel Amoros hits the bar for France and the game goes into extra time.

92min Marius Tresor puts France ahead. **1-2**.

98min Alain Giresse increases the French lead. **1-3**.

102min Having started on the bench due to a hamstring injury, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge pulls a goal back for the Germans seven minutes after appearing as a sub. **2-3**.

107min Three minutes into the second period of extra time, Klaus Fischer scores with a bicycle kick from six yards to send the game to penalties. **3-3**.

Spectacular...Fischer equalises for Germany

Penalties After both sides scored four of their five spot-kicks, Maxime Bossis' effort for France is saved in the sudden death shoot-out. Horst Hrubesch then scores his penalty to put Germany in the Final. **5-4 on penalties**.

Decisive...Schumacher saves from Bossis

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